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# **Does Nietzsche have a coherent view of Truth?**

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy in the School of Humanities and Cultural Studies,  
Middlesex University by

**THOMAS JOSEPH MARTIN FITZMAURICE**

**APRIL 2001**

## Abstract

Anyone intending to write about Nietzsche faces an immediate problem – How is one to interpret him? I tackle this methodological issue in my first Chapter and set out the various modes of interpretation usually adopted. I also discuss the status of the *Nachlass* and indicate a personal position with regard to the use of these unpublished notes.

In Chapter 2 I focus on whether Nietzsche does have a theory of truth. Early on he claims that truth is an illusion, but I argue that this position is untenable. Some American commentators attribute a pragmatic theory of truth to Nietzsche, but the textual evidence for this is lacking. As for the Coherence Theory, Nietzsche would only have accepted this if he espoused subjective idealism. He clearly rejects all forms of idealism. He was also firmly opposed to the Metaphysical Correspondence Theory. However, there is some evidence that he would have accepted a more conventional view of truth.

My third Chapter is more psychological, focusing on motivation. Will to Power is the central concept here and I analyse this in detail. It turns out to be a Janus-faced concept. Internal Will to Power gets linked to asceticism and the Will to Truth, whilst external Will to Power is tied to the creation of values.

The final Chapter is really a defence of objectivity. Perspectivism is frequently misinterpreted by Continental thinkers. I try to combat their relativistic readings and argue for a mature perspectivism. The latter does not entail a rejection of truth as commonsensically understood.

My Conclusion is that Nietzsche is seeking to establish a more elaborate view of belief which acknowledges the body as a primary source of motivation.

## A Note on text and translations used in this study with abbreviations

<i>Ref. Code / Title</i>	<i>Published</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Date</i>
BT / The Birth of Tragedy	1872	Golffings	1956
UM / Untimely Meditations	1873 – 76	Hollingdale	1983
HAH / Human all too Human	1876 –79	Hollingdale	1986
D / Daybreak	1880 – 81	Hollingdale	1882
GS / The Gay Science	1881 – 86	W Kaufmann	1974
TSZ / Thus Spoke Zarathustra	1882 – 85	Hollingdale	1961
BGE / Beyond Good and Evil	1885 – 86	Hollingdale	1973
GM / On the Genealogy of Morals	1887	Douglas Smith	1996
TI / Twilight of the Idols	1889	Hollingdale	1968
A / The Anti Christ	1895*	Hollingdale	1968
EH /Ecce Homo	1908*	Hollingdale	1979

\* Works completed by Nietzsche but published after his mental collapse.

### *Unpublished Works (Nachlass)*

WP / The Will to Power	Hollingdale & Kaufmann	1967
TL ‘On Truth and Lie in a Non-moral Sense’	D Breazeale	1979
PTAG Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks	M Cowan	1982

A fuller list of Nietzsche’s writings used in this study is provided in the general bibliography at the back of this work.

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## Preface

Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher, psychologist, Anti-Christian, philologist and musician, was, above all, a supreme writer of German prose. He was a very original thinker as well, but because of his literary turn of mind, he has been comparatively neglected in Anglo-American philosophy until fairly recently. To borrow a phrase of Walter Kaufmann's (1) 'he was in eclipse'. At best, he was seen as an impressive aphorist, whose psychological *aperçus* partly anticipated the findings of Freud and at worst, as one of the latest and possibly the most outspoken of a long line of German opponents of the ideals of liberal enlightenment.

It is only recently that Nietzsche has begun to receive the same serious consideration *as a philosopher* in English-speaking countries which has been commonplace on the Continent for the past sixty years or so. His works are no longer the sole preserve of enthusiasts and polemicists. Thanks in no small part to the recent output of some excellent translations of his writings and a number of serious studies of his philosophy, the realisation is dawning that this rather unlikely, even odd thinker, occupies a central place in the history of our thought and culture.

According to Richard Schacht, 'his long neglect was no doubt at least in part due to the fact that a great many people formed their impressions of him from the uses made of him by such commentators as Bertrand Russell'. Russell, in his chapter on Nietzsche in his *History of Western Philosophy* says that, 'Nietzsche, though a professor, was a literary rather than an academic philosopher. He invented no new technical theories in ontology or epistemology; his importance is primarily in ethics, and secondarily as an acute historical critic...' (2).

He caricatures Nietzsche as the defender of evil who cannot be proved wrong, but who is to be despised. Towards the end of the chapter, Russell parades his moral distaste for Nietzsche's philosophy. He concludes that: 'the ultimate argument against his philosophy as against any unpleasant but internally self-consistent ethic, lies not in an

appeal to facts but in an appeal to the emotions...His followers have had their innings, but we may hope that it is coming rapidly to an end’.

Happily, Russell’s prediction has proved false. As already mentioned, over the past sixty years or so, Nietzsche has come more and more to occupy centre stage. His legacy haunts the modern world. His elusive works, with their characteristic combination of penetrating analysis of the modern predicament and suggestive, if ambiguous, proposals for coping with it, have appealed to many artists and philosophers. J P Stern summed up his immense contribution very well when he described Nietzsche as ‘the seismograph of Modern Europe’. He was not just a great stylist but a profound thinker as well. He was also a rigorous thinker. Indeed, Gilles Deleuze (3) uses language more commonly associated with analytic philosophy to characterize his work: ‘Not only does all the rigour of his philosophy depend on it [accurate use of terminology] but it would be wrong to question its style and precision. In truth, Nietzsche employs very precise new terms for very precise new concepts.’

This brings me to the aim of this present study. I want to reconsider some of the debates surrounding relativism. My focus in particular shall be on cognitive concerns. Many Continental readers of Nietzsche take it for granted that he viewed truth as an illusion. The argument set out in the early and unpublished *Truth and Lie* essay is taken to be the essential Nietzsche and it is assumed that he never deviated from this position. In the early 1880s Nietzsche came to the conclusion that ‘the thing in itself’ was an unintelligible notion and that meant that the classical correspondence theory of truth was incapable of realization. At this point in time Nietzsche could not envisage any other alternative. He had read Schopenhauer and was very influenced by this philosopher’s theory of perception. He effected a move away from transcendental idealism towards a more subjective type of idealism. This would seem to point towards the espousal of some sort of Coherence theory of truth but as time went by Nietzsche became increasingly critical of Schopenhauer’s idealism, and indeed of idealism more generally.

Nevertheless, he continued to be preoccupied with the idea of truth, and occasional references to it appear in several of Nietzsche’s works. In this study I hope to show by means of an extended argument based on Nietzsche’s published writings that his position



on truth did change as time progressed and that he was eventually able to dispense with the early ‘truth as an illusion’ idea. He gradually realized that the rejection of the metaphysical correspondence theory did not necessarily entail that truth was impossible. Both absolutism and relativism were equally childish, as Nietzsche himself remarked later on (GS, section 345). So, some variant of the correspondence theory might still be a possibility. Nietzsche spends a great deal of time talking about an appearance–reality distinction when all he requires for a viable concept of truth is an appearance–thing distinction. Again, Schopenhauer's representationalism may have misled Nietzsche here, and it took some time before an alternative solution appeared on the horizon. I will argue on the basis of textual evidence that Nietzsche later on reconsiders his early views about truth and finds them wanting. This is surely what he is up to in the opening sections of BGE (see List of Abbreviations above). I was delighted to find support for this idea in the recent booklet on Nietzsche by Ronald Hayman (1997). In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche was flirting with madness by using several voices and styles. But in BGE he was aware that he could no longer be protected by a mask.

‘He had decided to confront all the implications of what he had written in 1873 about the impossibility of using words to tell the truth. For thirteen years, sidestepping many of the issues, he had never abandoned the fantasy that a philosopher could stay afloat by clinging to a spar of objectivity...’ (p. 35)

It is only at this late stage that Nietzsche opts for a more conventional view of truth, one which is purely a human truth and none the worse for that. If Nietzsche does not accept some sort of commonsense idea of truth how can we take anything he says seriously? As Roger Scruton (1994) puts it in *Modern Philosophy*, ‘The man who tells you truth does not exist is asking you not to believe him. So don’t’.

All that Nietzsche needs, having rejected Schopenhauer's subjective idealism, is to accept the idea that things have extra-mental existence and that there is a world out there separate from us. This would allow him to reintroduce some sort of correspondence theory, however minimal in content.

## Notes to Preface

- 1 The reference is to Walter Kaufmann's classic study of Nietzsche called *Nietzsche Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ*, (1974).
- 2 See the chapter on Nietzsche in any of the various editions of Russell's *magnum opus*, *History of Western Philosophy*.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche has revolutionized Nietzsche studies, especially in France. For details of his work, see Bibliography (p. 136).

## Acknowledgements

This thesis has been some ten years in composition, combined as it has been with professional obligations at Ealing and West London College and Southgate School. This long period of gestation has of necessity left me indebted to several people. First of all, I would like to thank Professor Jeremy Tambling and Mr John Munford for giving a very interesting class on Nietzsche at the London School of Economics in 1988. Their enthusiasm for Nietzsche was an inspiration to me.

I originally started to do research work on Nietzsche at Birkbeck College London in 1991. Dr Sebastian Gardner was my first supervisor, and it was he who suggested that I might explore the vexed question of whether Nietzsche did have a Coherent view of truth. Later on I also profited from sterling advice offered by Dr Christopher Janaway. He was particularly helpful on the Schopenhauerian background to Nietzsche's thought.

At Middlesex University, I had supervision under Professor Alexander Garcia Düttmann who was quick to identify several weaknesses in my original attempt to come to grips with Nietzsche's confusing remarks concerning truth. He saved me from many errors. He also encouraged me to rewrite the section on Heidegger which was very weak in the original draft.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr David Snelling, who now teaches philosophy at University College London, for showing a continued interest in my work and having faith in me when things were not going so well. I am grateful to Ms Marie Parker for typing several drafts of this thesis and being so patient with my many changes. Ms Anna Pavlakos, research administrator in the School of Humanities and Cultural Studies at Middlesex University, has been most helpful, responding with great patience and good humour to my many queries over the past few years. Special thanks go to her.

## CHAPTER 1

# Approaching Nietzsche – a question of methodology

A major headache for anyone intending to come to grips with Nietzsche's work is deciding which method to adopt. Reading and interpreting Nietzsche is not as easy as it seems. While there may be no way of getting him 'right', it is clear that there are many wrong turnings that one can take (1). All I can do here is give an indication of the line that is to be taken in the rest of this study.

Perhaps as good a place as any to begin is in trying to get clear why Nietzsche's views on truth are considered to be problematic. It is now commonly supposed that this German thinker denied that any human belief is, or indeed could be, true. In an early, unpublished paper (2), much cited by thinkers on the Continent, we are told that: 'truths are illusions we have forgotten are illusions'.

Similar ideas make their appearance in the published works. Let me quote just two brief examples. In *The Gay Science* (3) Nietzsche concludes section 354 as follows:

'We simply lack any organ for knowledge, for "truth": we "know" (or believe or imagine) just as much as may be USEFUL in the interests of the human herd, the species; and even what is here called "utility" is ultimately a mere belief, something imaginary, and perhaps precisely that most calamitous stupidity of which we shall perish some day.'

Even in works which came after *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche is expressing similar sentiments. In section 34 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (4) he reminds us that:

'Whatever standpoint of philosophy we may adopt today: from every point of view the ERRONEOUSNESS of the world in which we believe we live is the surest and firmest thing we can get our eyes on – we find endless grounds for it which would like to lure us to suppose a deceptive principle in the "nature of things" ...'

Such passages, when taken out of context and not related chronologically to Nietzsche's other texts, have led many thinkers, especially in France, to conclude that this nomad thinker has shown that if there is no truth, there are no facts. All we can hope for are interpretations or different perspectives on the world. We are not in a position to say whether one interpretation is the correct one or not. On this reading no final assessment of Nietzsche's views on truth can be given. As Maudemarie Clark points out (5), these writers are not concerned with putting forward arguments that will convince, but in playing erotically with the text.

Nevertheless, such ideas have been extremely influential in the Anglo-American world too. Danto has noted the close affinity between Nietzsche's supposed view of truth and the theories put forward by people like William James and John Dewey. There are also resemblances to the work of the later Wittgenstein. The 'truth is an illusion' view has exerted an enormous influence in the fields of theology and literary criticism. Irena Makarushka draws heavily on the early 'Truth and Lie' essay to substantiate her claim that Nietzsche is best viewed as a post-theological thinker. He is seen as rejecting traditional concepts of God and religious experience. He privileges immanence over transcendence. Theology gets transformed into anthropology, and the humanity of Jesus is emphasized. As a result of this shift of paradigm, religion now becomes a 'manifestation of the creative will engaged in the process of meaning making' (6).

Some contemporary literary critics hope to turn the tables on philosophy by proclaiming that 'all concepts are metaphors' and the truth claims of philosophy are metaphorical through and through. I am thinking of people like Jeremy Tambling and Christopher Norris (7). Tambling's conception of philosophy is cursory, however, and his theory of metaphor vague. Christopher Norris is forced to swallow his own words and in his Fontana Modern Masters text on Derrida, 1987, he admits that his hero is in fact dismissive of the idea of reducing philosophy to metaphor. The whole issue is superbly dealt with by Derrida himself (1982) in his well-known essay called 'White Mythology' (in *Margins of Philosophy*).

The trouble with this influential account of truth is that if Nietzsche espoused it, he can only end up contradicting himself. There is an immediate problem of reflexivity.

Some propositions self-refer in a rather obvious way: 'This sentence contains five words.' However, as the famous liar paradox reminds us, some of these sentences can generate confusion. In the sixth century BC the Cretan prophet Epimenides observed that 'All Cretans are liars'. Since he was a Cretan this appears to deny itself. Similarly, if it is supposed to be true that truth is an illusion, then there is apparently a truth after all. I raise this objection only to put aside answering it for the moment.

Some commentators like J P Stern (8) hold that Nietzsche never changed his mind about the idea that truth is an illusion. If this is correct it poses serious problems about how we are to interpret Nietzsche as a moral thinker. There is general agreement that Nietzsche's chief claim to fame is as a philosopher of value. He challenges the traditional picture of morality. But, as Maudemarie Clark rightly points out, he can't do this unless these opinions are taken to be true. She writes (p. 3): 'Nietzsche explicitly grounds his denial of morality on the claim that morality is based on error (D 103) and bases his demand that the philosopher "take his stand beyond good and evil" and leave the illusion of moral judgement beneath himself (TI VII 1) on the claim that moral judgement involves illusion. But if truths are illusions, the illusion involved in moral judgement can hardly give us reason to abandon it, assuming as we must, that Nietzsche does not demand that we abstain from judgement altogether' (p. 4).

Given these remarks, it looks as if the 'truth as illusion' view would undermine the coherence of Nietzsche's powerful attack on traditional morality. The problem, then, is this. How are we to explain the seemingly self-contradictory position Nietzsche adopts with regard to the truth? It is generally agreed that two options are available here: (a) to show that the self-contradiction is more apparent than real; (b) to concede the contradiction is present and see if it teaches us something about truth.

These two options occur frequently in the various writings about Nietzsche. We also find in the literature two very different views of truth attributed to this great philosopher. Since each strategy can be combined with either view of truth, that gives us four categories of interpretation to deal with the problems posed. The first three comprise the principal traditions or methodologies of Nietzsche's interpretation: the Anglo-American, the German and the French. The fourth approach is of more recent vintage.

It's what Maudemarie Clark calls '*a combined interpretation*'. Only a brief summary of each approach can be offered at this point – to set the scene, as it were. Let me commence with the interpretation that I am least sympathetic to, namely that of Nietzsche's fellow countryman Martin Heidegger.

## 1. The German interpretation

The Germanic tradition of readings tends to situate Nietzsche within the context of issues in modern philosophy, starting with Kant and continuing with Schopenhauer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some writers in the Marxist tradition have also evinced an interest in Nietzsche. Georg Lukacs, in a book called *The Destruction of Reason* (1950) tends to read Nietzsche as a sort of protofascist. Another German writer who draws on Marx, but is best known for his connections with the Frankfurt School, is Jurgen Habermas. He tends to interpret Nietzsche as an anti-enlightenment thinker. The emphasis is on the irrational side of Nietzsche, and he is seen as a nostalgic romantic. Then there is the post-Dilthey hermeneutic tradition epitomized by Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche has been extremely influential and has provoked much criticism from those working on the Continent, especially in France. His views have also been attacked by some philosophers writing within the analytic tradition. Because of his high profile, I propose to devote the remainder of this section to a discussion of Heidegger's views and how they bear on his reading of Nietzsche.

Heidegger attributes to Nietzsche the standard view of truth as correspondence to reality and the belief that his own views are true in the same sense. For him, Nietzsche represents the culmination of Western Metaphysics which, in its turn, culminates in the situation of the world today where power reigns supreme. In his well-known essay, *The Word of Nietzsche* (9) Heidegger makes clear that, for him, 'Metaphysics is thought as the truth of what is as such in its entirety and not as the doctrine of any particular thinker' (p. 54).

He goes on to interpret Nietzsche's metaphysics as Will to Power. 'The Eternal Recurrence of the Same is also interpreted as a truth in the traditional sense, i.e. it's a

metaphysical concept. In the essay just referred to, Heidegger expresses this as follows: 'Nietzsche considers that which thus rules to be the fundamental characteristic of everything real, i.e. of everything that is, in the widest sense. He conceives as the "will to power" that which thus determines in its ESSENTIA whatever is...' (p. 74, *ibid.*) We are told that 'the name "will to power" is a fundamental term in the fully developed philosophy of Nietzsche' (p. 76, *ibid.*) A few pages further on Heidegger adds: 'The way in which that which is, in its entirety — whose essential is the will to power — exists, i.e. its EXISTENTIA, is the eternal returning of the same.'

It seems as if we are meant to think the apparently irreconcilable thoughts of the will to power and the eternal recurrence together, so that they are seen as two aspects of one and the same concept. 'Ultimately, in the essential unity of the thoughts the metaphysics that is approaching consummation utters its final word.'

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche showed the errors committed by previous thinkers in Western metaphysics but was unable to disentangle himself completely from that tradition. He emerges as the last great philosopher of the age of the subject. He was in that sense the last metaphysician. But Nietzsche's understanding and rejection of metaphysics is itself metaphysical, according to Heidegger, for it ignores Being as Being (10), and chooses to comprehend Being, instead, in terms of values. In his essay already referred to above, Heidegger expresses these ideas in the following manner:

'Being has been transformed into a value... When the Being of whatever is, is stamped as a value and its essence is thereby sealed off, then within this metaphysics... every way to the experiencing of Being itself is obliterated... But if the thinking that thinks everything in terms of values is nihilism when thought in relation to Being itself, then even Nietzsche's own experience of nihilism, that is the devaluation of the highest values is after all a nihilistic one. The interpretation of the suprasensory world, the interpretation of God as the highest value, is not thought from out of Being itself.' (pp 102–105, *ibid.*)

Nietzsche had hoped to conquer nihilism by eschewing metaphysics. The Will to Power was supposed to give him a new 'principle' of values and the Eternal Recurrence was meant to serve as a 'this worldly' contrast to the transcendent worlds of Platonism and



Christianity. But, according to Heidegger, these concepts are themselves metaphysical because Nietzsche does not conceive of Being as Being. For Heidegger, then, Nietzsche's philosophy is not the overcoming of nihilism but the ultimate, perfect completion of nihilism (11).

In his essay Heidegger also links Nietzsche's idea of metaphysics as value to Descartes' subjectivism and foundationalism. The human being (or DASEIN in Heidegger's language) is changed into a subject — a substance or thinking thing, that which lies at the foundation of beings. The charge is that Being has been confused with the known for certain or that which endures unchanged or that which is quantifiable. This paves the way for Nietzsche because it establishes human beings in a dominant position with regard to everything that is. Nietzsche's subject is obviously not Descartes' Ego but it can be construed as a bodily ego, the centre of the drives and affects. In arguing that truths are illusions, Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, gives the subject absolute power to decide what will be true or false and thus what is and what is not being. In the aforementioned essay, he writes:

'The metaphysics of the modern age begins with and has its essence in the fact that it seeks the unconditionally indubitable...inasmuch as Descartes seeks this subjectum along the path previously marked out by metaphysics, he, thinking truth as certainty, finds the ego cogito to be that which presences as fixed and constant. In this way, the ego sum is transformed into the subjectum, i.e. the subject becomes self-conscious. The subjectness of the subject is determined out of the sureness, the certainty of that consciousness.'

Heidegger now proceed to translate this into Nietzschean language as follows:

'...certainty as the principle of modern metaphysics is grounded as regards its truth, solely in the will to power, provided of course that truth is a necessary value and certainty is the modern form of truth. This makes clear in what respect the modern metaphysics of subjectness is consummated in Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power as the essence of everything real.' (p. 83, *ibid.*)

The doctrine of the will to power, in one of its readings at least, is closely allied to Becoming so that at one point Nietzsche even declares that Being is 'an empty fiction'.

Heidegger reads this as confirmation of his own thesis about Nietzsche. By reducing Being to a value, 'a condition of the preservation and enhancement of the will to power' Nietzsche considers himself to be bringing to an end the history of Western metaphysics. Heidegger says he does this because Being has totally withdrawn and he thus brings to completion the history of Being in its withdrawal. Heidegger adds:

'Inasmuch as Nietzsche understands nihilism as the intrinsic law of the history of the devaluing of the highest values hitherto, but explains that devaluing as a revaluing of values, nihilism lies, according to Nietzsche's interpretation, in the dominance and in the decay of values, and hence in the possibility of value-positing generally.

Value-positing itself is grounded in the will to power.' (p. 75, *ibid.*)

When Nietzsche interprets Being as will to power he realizes he has gone from one extreme in philosophy to another. Plato had interpreted Being at the dawn of philosophy as Idea, now here is Nietzsche focusing on the Body as a source of energy and the drives. Will to Power is a very different concept from Plato's Ideas. It's a sort of inverted Platonism. 'Metaphysics, i.e. for Nietzsche, Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understood his own philosophy as the counter-movement to metaphysics and that meant for him a movement in opposition to Platonism.' But, argues Heidegger: 'Nietzsche's countermovement against metaphysics is, as the mere turning upside down of metaphysics, an inextricable entanglement in metaphysics.' (p. 61, *ibid.*) For Heidegger this means that Nietzsche has missed out on something important concerning this most fundamental of concepts. But Heidegger himself does nothing to resolve the apparent contradictions in Nietzsche's position on truth. He just accepts them at face value. Nietzsche, of course, denies the possibility of truth in his early work because he thinks the thing in itself to be an unintelligible notion and the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth to be an unobtainable ideal.

The chief weakness in Heidegger's account is his tendency to view Nietzsche's writings as a sort of trial run for his own philosophy of Being. The apparent inconsistencies in Nietzsche's position are music to his ears in this respect. For man, he tells us, must learn to let Being be, instead of twisting and dislocating it in order for it to yield up answers to our need for power. A more passive stance is required if we are to

recover the sense and mystery of Being. This would also involve the discovery of an original and non-traditional sense of truth. Truth for Heidegger is in an encounter in which something lets itself be seen, is uncovered, is no longer hidden. Truth is the unconcealment of Being. Heidegger also talks about human beings in a new way in his later writings as shepherds of Being and he now views language as the house of Being.

Derrida thinks that Heidegger was misguided in accusing Nietzsche of not thinking deeply enough about the nature of metaphysics. We cannot escape metaphysics and Nietzsche is not to be castigated for slipping back into it. Metaphysical assumptions are built into our very language and grammar according to Derrida (following Nietzsche) and we cannot speak a single sentence without presupposing them. Metaphysics can only be subverted from within (*Writing and Difference*, p. 280) (12).

Philosophers of an analytic persuasion are also critical of Heidegger's view, arguing that the question of Being reduces to the requirement that we provide a way of formally regimenting statements about existence and that is a matter of understanding the apparatus of quantification as set out in philosophical logic by Frege and others. Heidegger, they say, neglects this avenue of approach. But this is to seriously misread what Heidegger is trying to achieve. His conception of Being is very different from the Aristotelian one, and is far removed from modern developments in symbolic logic.

Another response to Heidegger is to say that the question of Being is really a quasi-religious question and therefore cannot receive and does not demand a philosophical answer. If one asks about the meaning of Being, one is asking a religious question. Heidegger was much more of a religious thinker than is sometimes made out. His philosophy rests on a metaphysical sense of the world or reality, one which his writings intend to revive. He does not think of this awareness in theistic terms, but in his essay on Nietzsche already referred to above, he addresses the phrase 'GOD IS DEAD' several times. He responds in various ways, i.e. by talking of beings as deserted by Being, of Dasein's forgetfulness of Being, of the need to recover Being and so on. These seem to amount to a plaint that God has been lost: the world is experienced under the aspect of an 'absent God' to use a phrase of Holderlin's.

A major problem overall for Heidegger's reconstruction of Nietzsche's argument is that it relies very heavily on the *Will to Power Notes* (13) which I find unacceptable as a primary source. I discuss this controversial issue further towards the end of this chapter. To conclude this section, let me say that I find Heidegger's conception of Being difficult to accept and consequently I am not very sympathetic either towards his reading of Nietzsche's philosophy.

## 2. The French readings of Nietzsche — a brief note

Heidegger was mainly responsible for the renewal of interest in Nietzsche among French thinkers. A French translation of Heidegger's *Nietzsche* appeared early on and much subsequent Gallic response was meant to be a refutation of Heidegger's reading by laying stress on the metaphorical nature of Nietzsche's work, his use of irony, etc. There was also, around this time, a reaction against the emphasis on structure and the desire for unity and systematization in French thought. (Claude Levi-Strauss had been very committed to structuralism and he thought it the ideal method to use in anthropology.) Hence this emerging movement was referred to as post-structuralism or post-modernism. Under this heading were included such influential figures as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Sarah Kofman. Here the focus was very much on questions of language, style and rhetoric. There was an emphasis on the nature of interpretation as such and these writers were highly critical of hierarchical or binary thinking when applied to Nietzsche's texts.

Many of these writers make an appearance in *The New Nietzsche*, Allison (ed.), 1986, (14), to borrow the title of a very popular anthology of writings about him. Inside the covers of this volume, we encounter a Nietzsche who is not a traditionalist – believing in the Correspondence theory of truth – but a radical thinker who, right from the start, maintained that truth was an illusion and saw no good reason to change his mind on the topic. This radical approach, when confronted by the apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's stance on truth, can respond in two ways: either by explaining it away or by insisting that we can profit from it. Arthur Danto, in his well-known book, adopts the former approach with his analytic account. The deconstructionists led by Derrida opt for the latter course. They admit the contradictions, but deny that they cause a problem. Alan Schrift in his paper (15) asks us to consider the various French descendants of Nietzsche 'not as competing voices seeking an absolute analytic privilege for their respective accounts, but as complementary voices in a chorus that calls for an end to the repression caused by oppositional thinking'.

In any case, this French tradition is not meant to have rigid boundaries and it overlaps with the German and Anglophone accounts. For example, it is clear that Derrida's writing owes a considerable debt to the work of Martin Heidegger.

To conclude this short section, let me say a few words about my own response to this tradition. Many of these readings of Nietzsche's texts are highly original and very radical. They tend to want to break down the boundary between literature and philosophy and consider Nietzsche's subtext to be just as important as the words written on the page. As will become clear later on, my own reading of Nietzsche is much more traditional in its approach. Whilst not as conservative as Heidegger's account, neither is it as radical as that proposed by the New Nietzscheans. Nietzsche's attack on metaphysics does not imply that he abandons truth altogether and opts for rhetoric instead. My own reading of Nietzsche tries to steer a middle course between these two extremes. I would argue that these French commentators tend to put too much emphasis on Nietzsche's early writings and underplay the progressive development in his thinking, and in that sense they tend to misrepresent him. But I concur with the New Nietzscheans in their defence of Nietzsche against Heidegger. I also find their ideas concerning Will to Power and the Eternal Recurrence very suggestive. Maybe these are not doctrines corresponding to reality at all, but attempts to formulate a new ideal? Nevertheless, dedicated Francophiles will be disappointed with the paucity of reference to such thinkers in the main body of my text. This is not because I think these writers have nothing important to say about Nietzsche — far from it — it is just that I am developing a different sort of argument about Nietzsche and truth, one that is in many respects antipodal to their Gallic response. My approach is reconstructive rather than deconstructive.

### **3. The American interpretations**

The impulse for a renewed study of Nietzsche came from the United States with Walter Kaufmann's interpretations and translation of Nietzsche as a philosopher, psychologist and Anti-Christ, and soon spread to Italy, France and Germany (16) In his fine and widely read book, Kaufmann did more than anyone else in the English-speaking world to

show that Nietzsche was a great thinker and not just a major literary figure. In the preface to the first edition of his book (1950) he wrote: 'The present book aims at a comprehensive reconstruction of Nietzsche's thought and is addressed to the general reader no less than to scholars...It seeks to capture something of the fullness and wealth of Nietzsche's philosophy without forcing it into a Procrustean system'.

When he comes to discuss Nietzsche's views on truth he opts for a more traditional interpretation, but unlike Heidegger he eschews metaphysical theories altogether and offers an empiricist reading instead. Kaufmann's line is to argue that the contradiction in Nietzsche's view of truth is more apparent than real. Nietzsche does believe in the existence of truth. What he is attacking in the oft-cited passages is metaphysical truth. Nietzsche wants to reject the eternal world of the Platonic forms and the Kantian thing in itself. There is no such thing as transcendental truth. But this does not rule out a more mundane sense of truth. According to Kaufmann's reading, Nietzsche can affirm the existence of empirical truth. He has no reason to deny that certain utterances or propositions are true. By adopting this approach Kaufmann can refute the suggestion that there is any conflict between Nietzsche's theory and his practice. He also interprets major doctrines like Eternal Recurrence and Will to Power as empirical truths. But there are some major problems afflicting this approach (17). Kaufmann stresses Nietzsche's claim that the Eternal Recurrence is to be taken as a scientific hypothesis but he does nothing to show this empirically. According to Clark, the only premise Nietzsche utilizes that can legitimately be considered empirical is that the history of the universe is not yet completed. Nietzsche's so-called 'proofs' have a metaphysical cast rather than being scientific in outlook. A second objection is even more devastating. Nietzsche in several passages seems to rule out even the very existence of things. These are but another human invention. How is Kaufmann going to explain away the existence of such passages in the published works? Otherwise, Nietzsche can be taken to hold that all our so-called truths are but illusions simply because they imply the existence of things.

Arthur Danto's contribution to the debate on truth is included under this heading because his approach too is broadly analytical (18). But his reading diverges in certain respects from Kaufmann's. In trying to account for the inconsistency in Nietzsche's

position of truth, Danto actually rejects the traditional interpretation. He argues that Nietzsche denies the existence of truth in the usual meaning of our human beliefs corresponding to reality, but Nietzsche affirms the truth of his own claims by opting for a pragmatic or coherence theory. But Danto is forced to admit that when it comes to the doctrines of Eternal Recurrence and the Will to Power Nietzsche falls back on the Correspondence theory. These are taken to be metaphysical concepts and are thus linked to reality. The problem here is that Danto makes no effort to show how this reversal can be reconciled with Nietzsche's criticisms of metaphysics generally. Because Danto takes Nietzsche's ultimate position on truth to be 'truth as an illusion' view, we can classify him as a radical interpreter.

Finally, let me say a few words about Dr Clark's own reading which she describes in her first chapter as 'a Combined Interpretation'. She defends Nietzsche against Heidegger and claims that he rejects metaphysics and eventually overcomes it in his later writings. But Nietzsche holds onto a more conventional view of truth and consequently does not undermine his own practice. In Chapter 5 of her book, Clark argues that Nietzsche's mature perspectivism gives him an alternative to the representational model of knowing which derived from Schopenhauer, and thereby permits him to affirm the existence of truth while denying transcendental or metaphysical truth (19). This sounds like Kaufmann all over again and in a sense it is. For Maudemarie Clark's approach is broadly an empiricist one and she sees herself as extending and fortifying the Kaufmann reading referred to above. But she also draws on material supplied by non-traditional interpreters when and where it is appropriate to do so.

Broadly speaking the sympathies of the present writer lie with this Anglo-American approach. In other words the basic orientation adopted is an analytical one. This does not mean, however, that I agree with everything these writers say about Nietzsche on truth. Certain disagreements will emerge in due course. But like them, I too want to maintain that Nietzsche was a great thinker, and what is more that his views developed as he went along. His ideas do form a coherent whole, even if there is no explicit system of the sort to be found in Kant's philosophy (20). His more mature philosophy is set out in his later



published works. But as Nietzsche himself often indicated, for a fuller understanding one would also need to have read his earlier books dating from *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards.

A great American philosopher of an earlier generation, William James, put it very well when he defined philosophy as the dogged struggle to achieve clarity. The philosopher is essentially concerned with arguments and with assessing their validity. Are they cogent or are they fallacious? The problem with the French readings of Nietzsche is that because virtually all these writers take Nietzsche's overall position on truth to be the illusory one, they consider the analytic approach to be misguided in the sense of seeking to find theories and arguments in Nietzsche's work. As Maudemarie Clark so eloquently expresses it, the Gallic view of Nietzsche's writings seems to be that:

'...[they] can only be supposed to offer a model of what lies on the other side of philosophy – the liberated intellect playing joyfully with itself, rather than engaged in the ascetic activity of offering arguments and theories or even attempting to say something true.' (21).

No-one would dispute that Nietzsche is best known and praised for the style of his prose, his poetic use of language and his command of metaphor rather than for the force of his philosophical argument. But any philosophical assessment of his work must stick to the arguments and see where they lead. This is what I propose to do in the present study.

One final issue need addressing. This is the vexed question of the status of the *Nachlass* in any reading of Nietzsche's work. There have been a bewildering variety of responses on this matter from a whole host of commentators who have written about Nietzsche. Only a brief summary can be given here, and a personal position indicated.

In addition to his published works, Nietzsche left behind a vast number of notes, sketches and literary fragments. This 'literary estate' is referred to by scholars as Nietzsche's *Nachlass*. An extremely influential selection of these notes were prepared for publication by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth Förster Nietzsche. This edition she presented to the German public as *The Will to Power*, a title which Nietzsche himself 'had envisioned for a book that remained unwritten' and was finally abandoned completely. Mrs Förster Nietzsche promulgated this collection as her brother's masterpiece, a view that

has been given a new lease of life by Martin Heidegger in his two-volume work on Nietzsche's philosophy. Heidegger even goes so far as to claim that: 'Nietzsche's philosophy proper, the fundamental position on the basis of which he speaks in these and in all the writings he himself published, did not assume a final form and was not itself published in any book...What Nietzsche himself published during his creative life was always foreground...*his philosophy proper was left behind as posthumous, unpublished work*' (22).

So, for Heidegger, the notes and fragments scrambled together by Nietzsche's sister and others are superior to the books Nietzsche published as a source of his final philosophy. As someone critical of Heidegger's infidelity to Nietzsche (see above) I am especially appalled by this methodology, which just facilitates Heidegger's own biased interpretation of Nietzsche's work. It is, admittedly, a very extreme stance, but it has its adherents.

Bernd Magnus, in a recent paper (23), discusses the controversy surrounding the Will to Power notes and the use of *Nachlass* generally by Nietzsche scholars. He makes what he terms a philological distinction between 'lumpers' who regard the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* as unproblematic, and 'splitters' who tend to distinguish sharply between published and unpublished writings. So, according to Magnus, Heidegger is definitely a 'lumper'. So is Richard Schacht (1983), who in the preface to his massive tome on Nietzsche says (p. xii): 'These unpublished writings too exhibit his philosophical thinking, and indeed contain much more of his expressed thinking on certain important matters than do his finished works...'. According to Magnus: 'The aim of most lumpers – from Jaspers to Heidegger to Danto and Schacht – is to place Nietzsche's writings squarely within the commentator's conception of the philosophical tradition' (p. 220). But what about the splitters? Magnus sees himself as one of these. Others include Hollingdale, Strong, Kaufmann at least officially, and more recently Maudemarie Clark. These writers prioritize the published works and see them as far superior sources of Nietzsche's philosophy. Dr Clark accords the *Nachlass* a secondary status and Walter Kaufmann believes the notebooks to be poor indicators of Nietzsche's intent. Derrida seems to occupy an in-between position, as he sees the two sources as of equal value.

The methodological difference between lumpers and splitters in relation to the unpublished material can have repercussions for how they treat basic themes in Nietzsche as a whole. For, as Magnus points out, the concept of the Will to Power occurs only rarely in the published works, while the cosmological version of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence is only to be found in the unpublished notes. Lumpers tend to treat perspectivism as Nietzsche's theory of knowledge, while some splitters are of the opinion that Nietzsche neither had nor wished to offer a theory of knowledge.

It's time to take sides. On the whole I think that the splitters' position is the more cogent one. It does seem a risky strategy to base one's entire argument on jottings, many of which were rejected subsequently and therefore not intended for publication. But one cannot rule out the *Nachlass* completely. The early *Nachlass* of the 1870s seems especially germane when dealing with epistemological issues in Nietzsche. Some of these pieces are very polished and fit for publication (24). Even Maudemarie Clark ignores her own advice and proceeds to write a long chapter on the early (unpublished) 'Truth and Lie' essay. Nietzsche himself also refers lovingly to this early paper in a published work (HAH 2, Preface). The case for being dismissive of the later *Nachlass* (i.e. The Will to Power Notes) is more clear cut (25). Bernd Magnus in his paper tells us that by the end of 1888 Nietzsche had abandoned the whole idea of producing a book with the title 'Will to Power'. On p. 230 he writes: 'I take it that the philological evidence shows that by the end of Nietzsche's stay in Sils Maria no *Hauptwerk* called "*Der Wille zur Macht*", was forthcoming and that by the year's end no *Hauptwerk* of any sort was forthcoming'.

This means that one ought to be wary of interpretations such as those of Heidegger, Nehamas and Schacht who draw heavily on the Will to Power notes to substantiate their claims (26).

## Notes on Chapter 1 – Approaching Nietzsche – a question of methodology

- 1 See Robert C Solomon's introduction to the collection called *Reading Nietzsche*, edited by Solomon and Higgins (1988).
- 2 'On Truth and Lies in a non-Moral Sense'. I am using the translation done by Daniel Breazeale and available in his *Philosophy and Truth: selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870s*, (1991).
- 3 The edition of *The Gay Science* utilized throughout this study is the Kaufmann one available in paperback from Vintage Books, 1974.
- 4 I am using the Hollingdale translation, Penguin Classics, 1990.
- 5 Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 1990. I shall have occasion to refer to this work in all four chapter, as it is by far the best analytical study of Nietzsche's metaphysics and epistemology currently available. I am in broad agreement with Clark's empiricist reading of Nietzsche.
- 6 *Religious Imagination and Language in Emerson and Nietzsche* by Irena S M Makarushka (1994). (See especially the 'Pretext', pp xi – xviii.)
- 7 *What is Literary Language?* by Jeremy Tambling (1988). See Chapters 5 and 6, especially. Dr Tambling is basically a literary scholar, rather than a philosopher.
- 8 See his early essay called 'Nietzsche and the Idea of Metaphor' in *Nietzsche – Imagery and Thought*, edited by Malcolm Pasley, or the final chapter of his Fontana Modern Master on Nietzsche as an alternative. Both items published in 1978.
- 9 A very good indication of the sort of interpretation of Nietzsche offered by Martin Heidegger is his essay called 'The Word of Nietzsche – God is Dead'. It forms part II of a collection of Heidegger's writings called *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (1977). Then, one could read 'Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?' which has been translated by Bernd Magnus, and is readily available in *The New Nietzsche* collection of papers (Allison, 1986, p. 64).
- 10 For overviews of Heidegger's thought, see George Steiner (1978), or more recent, *Heidegger*, by D E Cooper (1996). See also the footnote on Heidegger in Leslie Thiele's book, p. 34 (see Bibliography for details). There is also a discussion of

Heidegger's views on Nietzsche in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds Magnus and Higgins (1996, pp 310 – 314).

- 11 In speaking of German readings of Nietzsche, I must briefly mention another existential interpretation which originated about the same time as Heidegger's account. In 1935, there appeared Karl Jaspers's classic work on Nietzsche which has been translated into English by Charles E Wallraff and Frederick J Schmitz as *Nietzsche: an Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*. See especially the Prefaces and Book 2, Chapter 2 on 'Truth'. Jaspers agrees that a major problem is how one is to read Nietzsche. He writes that Nietzsche emerges as a contradictory and anti-systematic thinker. His thought seems groundless and he continually wears masks. Jaspers also remarks that Nietzsche is continually parodying his own stances. Nietzsche, he feels, wishes to refute any kind of Oedipal argument about himself. He is against any kind of narrative, be it Freudian, Marxist, or whatever. According to Ernst Behler in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, (p. 308), what Jaspers suggests in his original Preface forms the core of his entire Nietzsche interpretation. Jaspers wrote: 'We must abandon mere reading of Nietzsche for a study that amounts to an appropriation achieved by occupying ourselves with the totality of the intellectual experiences which make him so representative of our age. He then becomes symbolic of the destiny of humanity itself as it presses onwards towards its limits and sources'.
- Jaspers has been criticized by Kaufmann for making too close a link between Nietzsche's personal life and his philosophy. There are selections from Jaspers's writings also available in Kaufmann's *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, 1957.
- 12 A start might be made on Derrida by reading his short essay 'The Question of Style' in *The New Nietzsche* collection (Allison, 1986). Then, one could move on to Derrida's more extended study called *Spurs – Nietzsche's Style*, trans. Barbara Harlow, 1979. Also worth referring to is *Writing and Difference* which has been translated by Alan Bass (1978). Of the secondary literature, I have found the following particularly helpful: 'An Introduction to Derrida' by D C Wood, in *The*

*Radical Philosophy Reader*, edited by Richard Osborne and Roy Edgley (1985); 'Nietzsche's French Legacy' by Alan Schrift, in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, 1996; see also the chapter on Derrida in Barry Allen's *Truth in Philosophy and Derrida* by Christopher Norris (1987).

- 13 'The Will to Power' Notes from the 1880s have been translated jointly by W Kaufmann and R J Hollingdale (1968).
- 14 On *The New Nietzsche*, see Note 9 above.
- 15 Reference is to the article by Alan Schrift in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* in Note 12 above.
- 16 Kaufmann's book, *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ* (1974), now has the status of a classic.
- 17 Clark, 1990, see Chapter 1, p. 5.
- 18 Danto's book is called *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (1980).
- 19 Clark, 1990, pp 21 – 22.
- 20 Breazeale confirms this also. See pp xvi and xviii. Even if we don't find a system as such, we do find a connecting thread.
- 21 Clark, 1990, Chapter 1, p. 2.
- 22 This quotation from Heidegger is from his *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, trans. David Krell, 1979, p. 819.
- 23 Bernd Magnus calls his paper 'The Use and Abuse of the Will to Power', and it is conveniently reprinted in the collection called *Reading Nietzsche* edited by Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins, 1988.
- 24 These early *Nachlass* have been translated and introduced to English readers by Daniel Breazeale of the University of Kentucky. See note 2 above. Notice that Breazeale also argues that 'the published works should take precedence in any interpretation as opposed to the *Nachlass*'. (See p. xiv of his Introduction on this.) Graham Parkes, in his recent book *Composing the Soul* also prioritizes the published works (see p. 15 of his text).
- 25 See Note 13 above for the Will to Power reference.

- 26 John Richardson argues that the last note in the Will to Power collection, i.e. 'This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!' (WP 1067) seems to suggest an ontology – a truth about the essence of things. See his *Nietzsche's System*, 1996 (p. 8). He therefore disagrees with the line taken by Magnus and Clark. I shall have more to say about Richardson's reading in Chapter 3, below.

## CHAPTER 2

### Does Nietzsche have a theory of Truth?

‘What is Truth?’, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer (Francis Bacon *Essays, Of Truth*).

If he had stayed, what sort of reply could we give him? Well, truth is connected to beliefs about oneself and the World around one. In seeking the truth about things, we want knowledge. Nietzsche nowhere undertakes to give a thorough, systematic analysis of truth. He doesn’t exactly set out its necessary and sufficient conditions. However, according to Richard Schacht in Chapter 2 of his book (1983), p. 59: ‘Broadly speaking “truth” for Nietzsche is primarily a kind of property of certain propositions; or rather, it is a property identifiable in the cases of each of a number of different sorts of propositions. Following long-established precedent, he sometimes also employs the term in referring to what these propositions are about; but he actually considers the notion to be only secondarily or derivatively applicable (if at all) to whatever this may be. The problems of the analyst of truth for him is thus that of determining the conditions under which a proposition (or more broadly, an interpretation) may be said to have the property of truth – or of determining what that property is in the cases of the different sorts of propositions of which truth may be predicated.’

But we still have to tread carefully, for Nietzsche often talks about the origins of truth, its value to us, so here he is focusing on various ‘truths’ and our need for them to stay alive. We need to keep these two senses separate – that is, (a) what is it for a belief to be true? i.e. to do with the nature of truth, so this is basically cognitive or epistemological, and (b) what is it for a belief to be held true? which is more psychological or genealogical (to do with history or descent).

Some commentators might even take exception to my use of the word ‘theory’ in the title of this chapter. According to Leslie P Thiele (1): ‘This word “theory” connotes



a synthetic systematization that is foreign to Nietzsche's style: to his understanding of the individual...the individual is precisely that for which no general formulas are applicable.'

Nevertheless, a number of differing views about truth are discernible in Nietzsche's writings, and I shall now attempt to examine these.

### **Is Truth an illusion?**

In 1873, a year after *The Birth of Tragedy* was published, Nietzsche wrote a precocious paper entitled 'On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense' (2). This forms part of the early *Nachlass* and it remained unpublished until as recently as 1903. It is a brief essay, a mere fifteen pages, and it asks the age-old question 'What is Truth?'. It was to be a question that preoccupied Nietzsche throughout his entire philosophical life and the answer he gives here (at least according to some commentators) was retained in its essentials by Nietzsche in his later writings. It is seen as providing 'a sort of seedbox of later arguments' as J P Stern so aptly puts it (3). The essay is also centrally concerned with the metaphysics of language, another abiding theme of Nietzsche's.

'Truth and Lies' has proved to be a very important document for those who adopt what is called the radical or strong interpretation of Nietzsche's position on truth.

According to people like Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Paul De Man, etc. Nietzsche denies the existence of truth in the standard sense of any of our beliefs corresponding to reality.

'Truth and Lies' detailed defence of the claim that truths are illusions provides people like the New Nietzscheans with a major source for interpreting later remarks concerning truth in Nietzsche's published manuscripts as denials of truth in the traditional sense. (For more on the traditional view, see Barry Allen, 1995, Chapter 1.)

This early essay opens with a warning against the dangers of the intellect. Man sees himself at the centre of the Universe, but Nietzsche reminds him:

'...how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist...This intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly – as though the World's axis turned within it. But

if we could communicate with the gnat we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying centre of the Universe within himself.'

Man tends to overestimate the powers of his consciousness. He claims to know more than he actually does. Such *hubris* of knowing only leads to deception and delusion. The intellect is very prone to 'dissimulation', especially among the weak. They flatter themselves, pretend, lie, live 'in borrowed splendour' or hide behind convention. In fact, the vast majority of mankind deceive themselves concerning the value of existence.

'They are deeply immersed in illusions and in dream images; their eyes merely glide over the surface of things and see "forms". Their senses nowhere lead to truth; on the contrary, they are content to receive stimuli and, as it were, to engage in a groping game on the backs of things.'

In true sceptical vein, Nietzsche suggests that man in fact knows very little about himself (if he but reflects on the matter).

'Does nature not conceal most things from him – even concerning his own body – in order to confine and lock him within a proud, deceptive consciousness, aloof from the coils of the bowels, the rapid flow of the bloodstream and intricate quivering of the fibres? She threw away the key.'

It was not until the advent of Freud in the twentieth century that someone had 'the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by that which is pitiless, greedy, insatiable and murderous – as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger'.

But if the human situation is as Nietzsche described it, where could 'an honest and pure drive for truth have come from?'

Well, first of all, conventional designations are crucial if there is to be any social life and thus any culture. Truth is very much bound up with language. Man is a gregarious animal and likes to get along with other members of his tribe. Otherwise, he may get bored and fall victim to depression. So he compromises to some extent. This marks the beginning of the truth drive.

'A uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first law of truth. For the contrast between truth and lie arises here for the first time. The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. He says, for example, "I am rich" when the proper designation for his condition would be "poor".' (p. 81)

Such an individual is lying in the moral sense. As Nietzsche puts it: 'He misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversal of names.' In keeping with the scheme of things, 'true' means desiring what has pleasant, life-preserving consequences. Anything possibly harmful or destructive is to be avoided at all costs. Pure knowledge is of no use here.

It soon becomes clear that what Nietzsche is saying is that language, far from giving us a true account of things as they are in the World is, in effect, *ungrounded*. It is, in fact, no more than a convenient artefact. The utilization of words is purely conventional and their signification consists in the manipulation of other words. 'Language can never be literal in the sense that it can describe the reality of the World to us. Concepts like Truth and Knowledge are likewise viewed as relative to language or metaphorical.' (4) This seems to rule out the possibility of any sort of correspondence theory of truth.

On the next page (p. 82) we are told that 'the thing in itself' is 'something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language'. Kant thought that experience is only possible for self-conscious beings, for only they can distinguish states of themselves from things they experience, 'how objects seem from how they are'. Kant maintained that we are incapable of unmediated knowledge of whatever is outside ourselves – the so-called 'things in themselves' – we only know these things under the forms of intuition. This requires our sense impressions be brought under concepts, otherwise they will not display the order and regularity which provide the necessary background against which the distinction takes hold. What Nietzsche does here is give this Kant doctrine a linguistic flavour. He proposes that between words and things there is no direct contact and yet the two are not totally unrelated, for words are described as the distant and distorted echoes of sense perceptions. In a famous passage, Nietzsche expresses it thus:

‘This creator only designates the relations of things to men and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors. To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.’

Daniel Breazeale, in his introduction to his selection of Nietzsche’s early notebooks called *Philosophy and Truth* (5), is particularly helpful in explaining the significance of the passage just cited. He tells us that what Nietzsche means by the puzzling assertion that all knowledge involves metaphor is indicated by the etymology of the word itself. The infinitive would be (meta pherein) μετα φερειν which means something like ‘to carry across or to transfer’. When Nietzsche examined actual cases of knowledge, he concluded that the process involved in bridging the gap between subject and object bore a much closer resemblance to a process of metaphor formation than to any kind of picturing, mirroring or copying (Breazeale, p. xxix). In the essay itself, Nietzsche gives a physical illustration of what he means in the acoustical experiments of Chladny’s, in which sounds were transferred into sand patterns on a flat surface. What Nietzsche hopes to achieve by means of this analogy is elaborated upon by Professor Stern in his paper called ‘Nietzsche and the idea of metaphor’ (6). Let me quote the relevant passage: ‘This poeticizing translation into an entirely foreign language Nietzsche now likens to the production of Chladny’s figures, which are obtained by playing the bow of a violin against a board of very thin plywood covered with fine sand; the regular geometrical patterns into which the grains of sand arrange themselves thus reflect or reproduce the vibrations of the music – metaphors of a metaphor – but on the other hand it would be absurd to claim that you can tell from these patterns what it is that men mean by the word “tone” let alone that from these patterns they can tell anything about the nature of music’ (p. 69).

It is the same with language and even ‘things in themselves’, according to Nietzsche:

‘...we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colours, snow and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for

things...which correspond in no way to the original entities. In the same way that the sound appears as a sand figure, so the mysterious X of the thing in itself first appears as a nerve stimulus, then as an image and finally as a sound.' (Breazeale trans., p. 83)

Next, Nietzsche turns his attention to the formation of concepts. Concepts, he tells us, are only possible where there are words or signs, in other words a language. His remarks here are really just an elaboration of his views about metaphor formation. If we take the sound – let's say 'leaf' (to use Nietzsche's own example) what happens now is that sound gets detached from its original particular relation to a particular image and is allowed to refer to an indefinitely large number of more or less similar images. As Nietzsche himself expresses it:

'Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. Just as it's certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept "leaf" is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects. This awakens the idea that in addition to the leaves, there exists in nature the leaf: the original model...this in turn means that the leaf is the cause of the leaves.'

One is reminded of Schopenhauer's talk of Ideas and his reference to natural kinds or species and, of course, of Plato in antiquity. But Nietzsche objects and reminds us that there are no forms or concepts in nature. Even notions like species, he says, are purely human inventions. We know nothing about essences. The mysterious X remains inaccessible to us. There follows what is, perhaps, the most celebrated passage in the entire essay, much quoted by the radical interpreters:

'What, then, is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions: they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are

now considered as metal and no longer as coins...to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors.' (p. 84)

This familiar passage now needs considerable unpacking. The distinction between truth and lie in an extra- or non-moral sense arises, as we have seen, only with the arrival of linguistic conventions. In addition, given 'the arbitrariness thesis' which is discussed below, we can see that the function of language is purely a pragmatic one. It facilitates linguistic communication which is essential to social life. It is related to what Nietzsche calls in the second 'Untimely Meditation' 'the hygiene of life' (7). Its main role, according to J P Stern, is to hide the horrible nature of the world from us, to shield us from destruction. It's an untruth about what the Universe is really like. Lies in the non-moral sense are equivalent to illusions, that is, they are lies told unconsciously or without realizing they are lies (8). By identifying it with 'a moveable host of metaphors' Nietzsche asks us to consider language as primarily an aesthetic phenomenon. He stresses the changing nature of truth, the changing nature of language. Truths, he suggests, are like coins that lose their face with handling. The worth of their metal comes to be accepted when, in fact, they have no value except as currency.

Nietzsche objects to what is 'fixed and canonical'; because he sees these things as hostile to life. In like manner 'the regularization of the constituents of language is condemned as an aspect of the institutionalization of all individual experience' (9). Being 'rational' is now viewed as placing one's behaviour under the control of abstractions. Such a person 'will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions...Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. For something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations and clearly marked boundaries' (p. 84).

One must, Nietzsche acknowledges, vastly admire the architectural ability of mankind which builds 'an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation and, as it were, on running water' (p. 85). But this adulation must be confined

to the structuring ability of the human intellect, and 'not an account of his drive for truth or for pure knowledge of things'. For, at bottom, the vast edifice of concepts which Nietzsche, in a brilliant image describes as displaying 'the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium' are 'the residue of metaphors', and the architectonics of our conceptual scheme is 'thoroughly anthropomorphic...which contains not a single point which would be 'true in itself' or really and universally valid apart from Man' (p. 85).

According to Nietzsche, each perceptual metaphor is individual and without equal and is therefore able to elude all classification, but we forget this and mistake them for the things themselves. Nonetheless, it is only when mankind ignores the metaphorical or aesthetic nature of his predicament in the Universe by taking it for granted, '...in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an artistically creating subject, does [he] live with any repose, security and consistency'. Except for these rare moments of harmony experienced in the act of creation, the antagonism between the real world and the aesthetic attitude remain irreconcilable.

Again, on page 85, Nietzsche says that there is no such thing as the correct perception. Such an idea, we are told, is a contradiction in terms. We don't possess the criterion for correct perception and never could. *Why is this?* For the same reasons he gave when discussing the relationship between words and things. Metaphor is needed to bridge the gap between subject and object. It is not a mimetic or expressive relationship that is entailed here, but an 'aesthetic attitude'. In the text he says:

'I mean, a suggestive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign tongue – for which there is required in any case a freely inventive intermediate sphere and mediating force' (p. 86).

Nietzsche here is reiterating that there is no privileged standpoint. We are not in a position to compare the original with the copy. However, if the strict univocal reference between subject and object is called into question, the classical conception of propositional truth becomes impossible (see Barry Allen's *Truth in Philosophy*, Chapter 1). Be that as it may, Daniel Breazeale reminds us that 'Nietzsche concluded that knowledge could never be any more purely descriptive than language itself. And for him, the fundamental character of language is far more clearly revealed in the self-consciously creative use

which the artist makes of language than by the putatively objective and literal propositions of natural science; language is rhetoric' (10). By contrast, I shall argue that language is almost a physical thing and is very much in the public domain. Language has got to be anchored in reality, to borrow a phrase from Hilary Putnam.

The next page (p. 87, Breazeale version) is very difficult to interpret. It is the most obscure passage in the whole essay. Nietzsche expresses deep mistrust of certain sorts of idealism but he doesn't name names. He at first appears to reject subjective idealism, but later changes his mind. Given what he says about physics and the allusion to Newton, I take it that he is rejecting orthodox Kantianism and opting for a position closer to that of F A Lange (11) and of course Schopenhauer. Maudemarie Clark, in her very detailed chapter devoted to 'Truth and Lie' confirms the influence of Schopenhauer at this juncture. I shall draw freely on what she has to say to aid our understanding. Nietzsche, it appears, was much influenced by Schopenhauer's representational theory of perception. According to Dr Clark – 'At his most extreme, Schopenhauer writes that we do not know a sun, and an earth but only an eye that sees a sun and a hand that feels an earth'. He means simply that the objects we see and feel are 'there only as representation, that is, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents' (1819, I). Schopenhauer believes that the understanding constructs these objects 'out of the raw material of a few sensations' (1813, 75). Sensation itself is subjective, a local specific feeling...restricted to the region beneath the skin. As such, sensation cannot possibly contain anything objective, and so anything resembling intuitive perception... Subjective sensation becomes objective intuitive perception, according to Schopenhauer, only by means of a 'powerful transformation' which occurs 'when the understanding applies its sole form, *the Law of Causality*, to the given sensation. By means of this a-priori law, the understanding grasps the sensation as an effect for which there must be a cause. It then summons to its assistance *Space*, the form of the *Outer* sense also lying predisposed in the intellect' (12).

Well, it does seem as if Nietzsche's classification of things themselves, i.e. 'trees, colours, snow and flowers' as purely metaphorical is closely tied to Schopenhauer's idea of representation (p. 83 of the 'Truth and Lie' essay, Breazeale trans., confirms this).



Furthermore, there is a crucial passage in the page presently under consideration which looks like confirming Nietzsche's acceptance of Schopenhauer's view as regards the crucial part played by the a-priori forms of space and time. He writes:

'After all, what is a law of nature as such for us? We are not acquainted with it in itself, but only with its effects, which means in its relation to other laws of nature – which in turn are known to us only as sums of relations...All that we actually know about these laws of nature is what we ourselves bring to them – time and space and therefore relationships of succession and number. But everything marvellous about the laws of nature, everything that quite astonishes us therein and seems to demand our explanation, everything that might lead us to distrust idealism; all this is completely and solely contained within the mathematical strictness and inviolability of our representations of time and space. But we produce these representations in and from ourselves with the same necessity with which spiders spin.'

As regards the a-priori role of causality, things are less clear. Nietzsche appears to reject the role of causality with regard to the original nerve stimulus and its connection to the subsequent generated image (see top of p. 87 and also p. 81, *ibid.*). In the earlier of the two passages he says:

'But the further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside of us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason.'

Daniel Breazeale (13) in a footnote to page 81 clearly takes these remarks to be a direct attack on Schopenhauer. This seems right. Then, again, an alternative reading might be that when Nietzsche rejects the move to a cause 'outside of us' he is just agreeing with Schopenhauer's denial that the principle of causality allows us to infer the existence of anything that exists separately from consciousness itself. In any case, everything is to be explained as being a result of metaphor as Nietzsche indicates at the close of the first section of this early essay. The second section is much briefer and need not be considered here as Nietzsche has nothing further to add to the above ideas that is significant.

So much by way of description, but what are we to make of Nietzsche's arguments here? Are they cogent? Any account of Nietzsche's philosophy of truth must start with the central role he ascribes to language, for only with this does there arise for the first time the contrast between truth and lie. Telling the truth is 'to lie in accord with a fixed convention' (TL 84). He is therefore utilizing 'illusions' as equivalent to 'lies', that is lies in the non-moral sense. But, as Dr Clark remarks, lies in this sense are not the same as lies ordinarily understood. For to tell a lie in the latter sense 'one must assert what one believes false'. But when Nietzsche calls truths illusions 'he does not mean by this that they are, after all, falsehoods or metaphors, but that they are not truths in the sense that some philosophers have imagined – beliefs or statements which correspond to a reality independent to our perceptions and conceptions'. As Professor David Cooper reminds us, Nietzsche is not saying that truths are metaphors, *but the residues of metaphors* (14). Granted, but if his view is that any true assertion is at the same time false, he is in conflict with the standard philosophical understanding of truth. Plato defines truth for classical philosophy: 'The statement which says of what is that it is, is true; the one that says that it is not is false.' (*Cratylus*, 3856). If being true and being false are not mutually exclusive, then Nietzsche's position collapses into absurdity. Maudemarie Clark is concerned because Nietzsche's stance seems to require him *to reject basic logic*. She writes (p. 66): 'To make even minimal sense of Nietzsche's position we must assume recognition on his part that a belief cannot be both true and false (at the same time in the same respect, etc.)...If "it is not raining" is false, then "it is raining" must be true', otherwise we will not be able to make any sense of people's utterances. This seems fair enough. But Nietzsche, in fact, attempts to answer such criticisms in another of these early, unpublished fragments called *The Philosopher* (15) which is available in the Breazeale selection of the early *Nachlass*. In this fragment he writes:

'Logical thinking was employed very little by the Ionians and developed quite slowly. But false inferences are more correctly understood as metonymies, i.e. they are more correctly understood rhetorically and poetically. All rhetorical figures (i.e. the essence of language) are logically invalid inferences. This is the way that reason begins.'

The analytic philosopher can only respond to this in the now famous words of Lady Thatcher: 'NO, NO, NO'. (See my criticisms of metaphor, below.)

Nietzsche's next revelation is what is usually referred to as 'the arbitrariness thesis' which stresses the conventionality of language. Nietzsche informs us that the rules which establish the correct designations for things are totally arbitrary: 'The bulk of our general terms might have developed extensions wildly different from those they actually did.' Hence Professor David Wiggins's judgement on Nietzsche's account, that it is startling and in violation of common sense (16). For why should the fact that we might choose to use different words to say the same thing affect its truth value? As Maudemarie Clark rightly points out: 'We cannot plausibly regard obedience to convention as sufficient for truth-telling unless we build correspondence to reality into the idea of such obedience, which then becomes equivalent to using the correct words for the way the world actually is... Suppose that, surprised by what I believe to be a sudden rain shower, I say, "It's raining" to a group of Anglophones. My utterance conforms to the conventions accepted by my listeners. It may, nevertheless, fail to correspond to reality, e.g. if the water I see actually comes from a lawn-sprinkler...' (p. 68).

In fact, the truth of an utterance does not have to be tied to a specific set of conventions. If I spoke in German instead of English and said, '*Es regnet*' it would still be false. The truth of an utterance depends on two factors essentially: (1) the meaning of what one says; (2) the way the world is. Knowledge of the conventions of speakers' languages obviously helps in figuring out their meaning, but as Clark concludes: 'Knowledge of these conventions is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowing most of the truths we want to know. The arbitrary character of these conventions is a triviality from which nothing important about truth follows' (Clark, 1990, p. 69).

Another reason why Nietzsche might have been led to adopt the 'falsificationist hypothesis' concerns the essential creativity of language. He viewed it as metaphorical or figural, primarily. But Nietzsche believed that metaphors are never literally true, so the assumption that all language is metaphorical would give him a reason for denying that we can express literal truth at all. Now, insofar as this thesis forms the kernel of Nietzsche's thought at this time, we need to examine it in some detail. After all, he treated the subject

very seriously and took metaphor to be the basic principle of language. Professor David Cooper, in his recent book simply called *Metaphor*, refers to it as ‘The primacy of metaphor thesis’ (17). This is the view that metaphorical talk is temporally and logically prior to literal talk. That would entail that fresh metaphors can never be true, since truth only clings to metaphors which have become established, ‘worn out’ in Nietzsche’s own phrase (18). According to Professor Cooper, Nietzsche was *not* the first to put forward such a thesis. P B Shelley, the poet, had written that: ‘language is vitally metaphorical...it marks the before unapprehended relation of things...until words, which represent them become signs for portions of thought’ (*Defence of Poetry*, 1821). Arthur Danto is one philosopher who finds it difficult to accept this thesis at face value:

‘For one thing, it might be readily objected that the claim that every sentence is metaphorical verges on meaninglessness. It is one thing to say that some sentences, deviant under a given scheme, are metaphorical relative to sentences which are standard under that very scheme. If one thus defines metaphor, however, then if every sentence is metaphorical, each sentence is deviant, which is absurd. Moreover, if we do not have some sentences to be counted as straight declarative utterances with which to contrast others as metaphorical it is difficult to see what we any longer can mean by metaphor at all’.

Nietzsche also seems to be *not* quite correct when he claims that metaphors are never literally true. The American philosopher Donald Davidson, in a very influential paper called ‘What metaphors mean’ (19) says: ‘Patent falsity is the usual case with metaphor, but on occasion patent truth will do as well. “Business is business” is too obvious in its literal meaning to be taken as having been uttered to convey information, so we look for another use’.

But even if we go along with the original contention that all metaphors are false, it is difficult to see how Nietzsche could hold to the idea that all language is metaphorical. This can only lead to paradoxical results. If a metaphor is but a concrete image used in place of a concept, i.e. metaphorical thinking is non-conceptual thinking, then as Danto points out: ‘To say that all sentences are metaphorical entails that the thesis itself is metaphorical, hence not literally true, hence literally false. So if he is right, he is wrong...’

(Danto, 1980). Danto believes that Nietzsche would have accepted this criticism and underscored it. He could reply that we have no clear idea ourselves what the literal truth would look like. He might well have exclaimed with Walt Whitman: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself: I am large, I contain multitudes' (*Songs of Myself*).

Perhaps an example will help to clarify the issue surrounding metaphor here. If I say, 'Henry is a lamb', I have made an assertion and quite clearly a false one. But why do I interpret such a proposition as a metaphor? Donald Davidson once more comes to our aid here. He rejects the more traditional explanations in terms of speaker meaning and metaphorical meaning (e.g. Searle and Eva Kittay). He favours a much more radical solution. Metaphor, he argues, is a different sort of thing altogether. In explicating 'Henry is a lamb' it is clear that the literal approach won't do the trick. The conversational maxim of truth is not being flouted because the utterer is truly trying to describe Henry's character. As Davidson sees it, metaphors cannot be paraphrased because there is nothing to paraphrase. Metaphors have a point, but they have no meaning beyond the literal meaning. Rather, metaphor makes us see one thing as another that inspires or prompts insight (i.e. further thoughts). So it is an imaginative sort of exercise. The hearer comes to see Henry as a lamb. It gives her a picture and this in turn leads to thoughts about what it is a picture of – but the utterer could not use the words in question to get the hearer to notice these similarities, unless both participants know how to use the words literally. If the hearer knows what a lamb is, he realizes straight away that something 'deviant' is going on.

Despite all this, many thinkers on the Continent remain unconvinced. They continue to hold that all language is metaphorical or figural. Perhaps the most sophisticated recent statement of 'the primacy of metaphor' thesis is that of Hans Georg Gadamer. He provides us with a very clear exposition of these issues in his well-known book *Truth and Method* (20). According to Professor David Cooper, Gadamer avoids some of the pitfalls one encounters in Nietzsche's account, but ultimately his primacy thesis also fails to convince. Regrettably, I lack space to do this justice here, but I recommend Professor

Cooper's discussion of Gadamer's view which can be found in Chapter 4, Section D of his 1986 book called *Metaphor*.

In my exposition above, I noted that Nietzsche makes reference to Chladny's work on sound, but according to J P Stern, Nietzsche renders a disservice to his own argument by drawing on this analogy from the natural sciences. He comments that: 'By pointing to Chladny's sound patterns and to the fact that, whatever else they do, they do not explain what music is, Nietzsche is, in fact, showing how inadequate the analogy – the argument from metaphor – really is, and thus pointing to the break between the psychic and the physical, between mechanical purpose and human meaning' (21).

What Nietzsche has to say about concepts is obviously closely connected with his ideas about metaphor. Consider once more the metaphorical statement 'Henry is a lamb'. This is incorrect if Henry is human, since his properties are not identical with those of a lamb. What has happened is that one has stated an identity where there is only a similarity and that is why the statement is incorrect. But, as I indicated above in my exposition of Nietzsche's view of concepts, he believes that the concepts necessary for literal use are constructed in a similar manner. Literal statements have the same structure as metaphors: two unequal or non-identical things are stated to be the same. The only difference between metaphorical and literal usage is that the latter demands that we forget that there are similarities only between objects. Let us focus on an everyday example to see the ramifications of this: When we say 'That chair is red' we believe that the object shares an identical colour with other things we call 'red' and has the same essence as other structures we call 'chairs' (source of example Clark, 1990). This explains why we take most literal claims to be true, whereas we instantly recognize most metaphorical claims as false. But if Nietzsche is correct and there is no identity here but only similarity, then literal claims turn out to be as false as metaphorical ones. In the well-known phrase, they are 'illusions we have forgotten are illusions'.

Nietzsche's polemic here just raises the whole issue of what we take the term 'concept' to mean. I have already presented arguments to demonstrate that where there is metaphor there must also be literal talk. That entails that concepts must have boundaries. Gadamer writes as if this is not the case, for he says that when we apply old words to new

objects, 'there is at the same time a constant process of concept formation [and] the concept that is meant by...the word is enriched by the particular view of an object' (Cooper, 1986, p. 267).

Professor David Cooper rightly picks up on this and suggests that 'If the word really does express a concept, then surely not just any new application of it could have the power to modify the concept...a concept so fluid that each new application alters its shape will be too ghostly to deserve the name concept at all' (Cooper, 1986, p. 268).

According to Professor David Hamlyn in his *Theory of Knowledge*, there are criteria to which something has to conform if it is to count as a proper concept (22): 'To have the concept of X, to know what it is for something to be an X, we need to know not only the formal defining conditions for an X but also what counts as an X. That is to say that we must in the appropriate circumstances be able to recognize an instance falling under the concept, if there is one...It is for this reason that Wittgenstein said that language depends not only on agreement in definitions but also on agreements in judgements. There must be agreement because without it the conditions for the concept could not be objective; intersubjective agreement is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of objectivity. The conditions for the concept, to which I have referred, constitute its criteria...'.

In other words, there must be something in virtue of which application can be judged correct or incorrect. We need to be able to define and categorize.

*'Something particular is subordinated to a universal concept.'*

If this is the generally accepted view of what a concept is, then Nietzsche's view is diametrically opposed to it (23). Technically speaking, he adopts what is called a *nominalist position*. Only words are universal, whilst reality is purely individual. Professor Hamlyn's comments on this approach deserve mention. He says on p. 76, 'The thesis that everything that exists is particular is a seductive one, perhaps largely because of the importance that particular things play in our lives. But if the world was not such that it had common and repeatable features, we would never be able to think of it as we do: we would never, for instance, be able to attribute to it predicates that are applicable and reapplicable to a number of different particulars' (24). This brings me to the passage where Nietzsche says that there is no one correct perception (25). We don't possess any

criteria for such a thing, is the argument. But are things here as dire as Nietzsche implies? Surely total subjectivity is not the only option. We have already defended the idea of a concept against Nietzsche's 'residue of metaphor' hypothesis, and as Professor Hamlyn points out, perception too 'is essentially concept dependent and we can conceive of perception of a common world only through a common system of concepts...The concept of perception is already linked through the concept of its object with a public world. This can be seen from the fact that the idea of seeing something as red would be unintelligible unless the idea of something being red was already understood...our understanding of red must inevitably involve reference to what is seen as red under normal conditions and this in turn involves reference to normal observers and normal vision'.

The fact that some people vary in their perception of colours (the colour-blind, an obvious case in point) does not undermine the objectivity of colour judgements in general. Hamlyn wants to deny that all colour judgements are 'in a curious sense subjective in that none of them have any real application to anything in the world'. He argues that there are criteria of truth for a judgement of the form 'that is red'. Objectivity and truth are not synonymous. Rather, objectivity is a way of approaching the truth. It rules out certain obstacles like subjectivity, prejudice, idiosyncrasy, etc. And yet Hamlyn's 'conceptual truth', as he calls it, allows for the fact that our concepts can change and develop. But it is wrong to suppose that our understanding can be entirely divorced from the facts. It is not open to us to develop and change our conception of colour (to stick with the same example) in any direction we choose. Hamlyn rejects a position similar to Nietzsche which he calls 'complete conventionalism'. 'How we conceptualize our understanding of the world is not completely a matter of convention. It is not a matter of convention that human beings are what they are and have the perceptual apparatus they have and it is not a matter of convention that the world is as it is and that things affect our senses in the way they do.' (Hamlyn, 1971).

The final pages of Section One of 'Truth and Lie' concern idealism, and the argument here is obscure. As I interpret him, Nietzsche seems to be rejecting Kant's transcendental idealism and opting for a position closer to Berkeley's subjective idealism. Perhaps Nietzsche had Schopenhauer's philosophy in mind which would also seem to fit



here. When Nietzsche expresses 'a deep mistrust of all idealism of this sort' I take that to be transcendental idealism which posits 'things in themselves' behind appearances.

Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer in believing that the world we perceive exists only as representations. Schopenhauer goes further and claims that the empirical world does not subsist independently of consciousness. According to Maudemarie Clark (1990, p. 81): 'Nietzsche, in contrast, apparently thinks that common sense affirms the independent existence of the external world...He admits, we believe we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colours, snow and flowers...He presumably does not reject the whole idea of independently existing objects as contradictory, as Schopenhauer does. He simply denies our perceptual access to such objects.'

The situation here is further complicated in that Schopenhauer, unlike Kant, believed we could form ideas about the true nature of things in themselves. This is because he claimed that we also experience the phenomenal world as a body. We experience ourselves, not only as external objects of perception, but from within as the will to live. This amounts to Schopenhauer's metaphysics, for he views it as the primary reality. It is a unity and lies outside space and time. Everything is subject to the will's constant striving, even reason. Nietzsche, though, is critical of Schopenhauer's account of will in its metaphysical aspect, and replaces it with his own, more psychological, notion of the will to power. Given these various moves, Nietzsche now seems to have come full circle. Even in this early unpublished paper, he appears to be rejecting subjective idealism and opting for some sort of neo-Kantian position instead.

At one point in 'Truth and Lie', Nietzsche does distinguish clearly between things in themselves and the things themselves. The former is the world considered as it is in itself, apart from human beings. The things themselves are just extra-mentally existing things as contrasted with mere representations. Maudemarie Clark clarifies this situation brilliantly when she adds: 'To affirm the existence of things themselves...is merely to reject subjective or Berkeleyan idealism, to insist that the existence of some things is independent of (irreducible to) being perceived or represented. These are two quite different affirmations and the second does not entail the first, i.e. to insist that reality consists of independently existing things does not commit one to identifying reality with

the Kantian thing in itself' (Clark, 1990, p. 82). The problem is that, at this early stage, Nietzsche does not adhere to his own distinction. He claims that truth is an illusion because it does not correspond to the things themselves, but he continues to treat the things themselves as equivalent to the things in themselves. Nietzsche only gradually realized that the things themselves and the things in themselves ought to be kept separate.

Perhaps, then, Nietzsche is not a subjective idealist after all, but some sort of realist? I shall discuss this further below when I consider the Minimal Correspondence Theory. But for now, let me conclude, that the 'truth is an illusion' [view], given that my interpretation of it is correct and taking into account the arguments brought forward to controvert it, seems untenable if truth is understood in the standard or classical sense. (On the latter, see Barry Allen, 1995, Part One.)

### **Does Nietzsche have a Pragmatic theory of truth?**

According to Professor David Nyberg (1993) (26), the search for truth is a search for belief. He also reminds us that, 'Historically the pragmatists thought visions of truth as existing apart from human investigative activity to be absurd. They were far more interested in science and human conduct than in metaphysics'. Nyberg instances William James as a case in point: 'For William James the purpose of thought was *not* to get reality "right"; it was to form ideas that would satisfy the thinkers' interests. So an idea that generated a concrete, particular effect in the life of an individual – that is what he meant by "practical" – became an important belief. Beliefs that provide "vital benefits" may be regarded by the individual as true... Truth is, as the pragmatists would have it, what works' (p. 37).

Now several American commentators on Nietzsche have attributed such a theory to him also. Arthur Danto was one of the first to argue this line in *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (1980) (Chapter 3), although he later seems to have second thoughts or doubts (see p. 80 of his text). John Wilcox says that Nietzsche's 'human truth' turns out to be 'erroneous truth' (1974, p. 156). Richard Schacht (1983) also opts for the pragmatic theory, at least to some extent. Even Fr Copleston can be interpreted as ascribing a pragmatic theory of

truth to Nietzsche (1975, p. 221). According to these writers, Nietzsche's attack on truth is directed only at the standard/classical conception of truth – that is, at truth as correspondence to the facts. We are told that Nietzsche himself accepts and approves of truth construed as what is useful and of value to us humans. As Danto succinctly expresses it: 'To demand that science be true is to expose oneself to question whether "truth" means anything more than the facilitation of life' (1980, p. 72). Professor Danto sums up Nietzsche's positive theory of truth in the following way: ' $p$  is true and  $q$  is false if  $p$  works and  $q$  does not' (p. 72, *ibid.*). According to this pragmatic theory which Danto finds in Nietzsche, truth is what works, i.e. satisfies practical interests such as survival or happiness. An obvious reply here might be, 'Why couldn't a false belief make us happier than a true one?'. But Nietzsche in several places warns us that knowledge of the truth may clash with the pursuit of happiness. Let me just cite two brief passages from *Beyond Good and Evil* as evidence for these remarks. In Section 11 he writes:

'...it is high time to replace the Kantian question "How are synthetic judgements a-priori possible?" with another question "Why is belief in such judgements necessary?" – that is to say, it is time to grasp that, for the purpose of preserving beings such as ourselves, such judgements must be *believed* to be true, although they might, of course, still be *false* judgements!'.

The opening of Section 39 runs as follows:

'No-one is likely to consider a doctrine true merely because it makes happy or makes virtuous; excepting perhaps the dear idealists...happiness and virtue are no arguments' (Penguin trans., p. 68).

On Danto's reading, Nietzsche thinks that if one accepts the classical correspondence view, all one's beliefs will turn out to be false because there are no facts and consequently nothing for these beliefs to correspond to. Nehamas (1985) (27) quotes a famous passage from *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche appears to claim that even if we accept the pragmatists' theory at least some of our beliefs will be true, nonetheless. He writes:

'We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and the rest, form and content; without

these articles of faith, nobody now could endure life. But that does not prove them.

Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error.' (GS, section 121). For Nehamas, this affirms Nietzsche's belief in a correspondence theory for 'He claims that our basic beliefs, whatever their value to life, are false' (p. 53).

In dozens of similar passages Nietzsche separates a belief's pragmatic value from its truth. This demarcation is only intelligible if the basic analysis of truth is not a pragmatist one in terms of preservation, power, etc. Commentators such as Nehamas, Clark, Cooper all accept that Nietzsche analyses truth as a thoroughly *realist* notion, namely as correspondence to facts, to reality.

According to Nehamas (1985) passages such as the above 'argue strongly against attributing to [Nietzsche] the pragmatic theory, since it does not in any way propose to replace correspondence to the world with indispensability to life as a criterion of truth'.

According to Professor David Cooper's account in his earlier book on Nietzsche called *Authenticity and Learning* (28a), Nietzsche does accept pragmatism but this only applies to his eventual reconstruction of truth, and not to the analysis of truth itself. Cooper claims that Nietzsche must surely have been correct in thinking that the standard notion of truth is the realist one.

The problem with Cooper's account is his reconstructed theory of truth. He argues that Nietzsche discards our ordinary concept of truth and puts novel uses to the old words 'true' and 'false'. He says that if we are to retain the words 'truth' and 'knowledge' in our discourse, 'the old realist notions having been discredited, we must understand them, frankly and explicitly in terms of power and pragmatic yield...' (pp 78 – 79). Cooper, like Danto, assumes that there is only one correspondence theory and what he is putting forward is not really a theory of truth at all in our terms. His position here seems close to that of Grimm (28b). However, unless Nietzsche has very good reasons to reject our everyday notion of 'true' this move to a 'new use' would seem to reflect only on arbitrary linguistic decision of no philosophical interest (Clark, 1990, p. 33).

According to Kaufmann (1974), Nietzsche anticipates many of the ideas of pragmatists like Peirce and James, but because many of his suggestions surface only in the later *Nachlass*, we have to discard them. Nietzsche no doubt withheld these from

publication because they were not fully worked out. Kaufmann concludes that, 'whatever one may think of pragmatism, Nietzsche did not think it through and failed to integrate it successfully with the remainder of his philosophy' (Kaufmann, 1974, pp 88 – 89). In a later chapter in his book, Kaufmann points to Nietzsche's very decided opposition to William James's 'right to believe' and to any doctrine of *double truth* (29). Kaufmann portrays Nietzsche as a sort of experimental philosopher, but this is not to be equated with pragmatism (p. 89, *ibid.*).

For Alexander Nehamas (1985, p. 53) Nietzsche is very much concerned with whether what is true is always of value. But since he obviously does not think it is, it is difficult to ascribe to him an analysis of truth as usefulness, i.e. the pragmatic theory. Again, Nietzsche often says that error is more valuable than truth. But he does not infer from this that 'what the correspondence theory considers to be error is from a pragmatist's point of view the truth'.

The following passage from *The Gay Science* is often quoted to indicate that Nietzsche espoused a pragmatic theory of truth:

'We know (or believe or imagine) just as much as may be useful in the interests of the human herd, the species: and even what is here called utility is ultimately also a mere belief, something imaginary, and perhaps precisely that most calamitous stupidity of which we shall perish some day' (GS section 354).

I quoted this passage before to substantiate the 'truth is an illusion' view. Nehamas teaches us to read it more carefully. Nietzsche, he informs us, is here mixing together the notions of knowledge, belief and imagination. Furthermore, he does not claim that utility constitutes, or even that it explains truth (Nehamas, 1985, p. 54). What he says instead is that our *belief* that a view is useful, a belief which may turn out to be false, is what makes us consider that particular view as true, whether this is or is not the case. Nietzsche, of course, continually writes that truth is related to the feeling of power. The following passage is representative of this:

'What is good?' – All that heightens the feeling of power, the Will to Power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? – The feeling that power increases – that resistance is overcome.' (A, section 2).

Once again, we are in Nehamas's debt for reminding us that for Nietzsche, 'far from being his own account of the nature of truth, this is only his explanation of the fact that people accept certain views as true even if, as it turns out, they are not'. 'Power and the feeling of power do not secure for us truth any more than utility does.' (Nehamas, 1985, p. 54.)

A question often asked by Nietzsche is: Why seek truth at all? In *Beyond Good and Evil* he remarks, 'Granted we want truth: why not rather untruth?' (BGE 1). The question seems an odd one; read one way it sounds absurd. As Michael Tanner puts it: 'It is perfectly acceptable to say that one wants to remain in ignorance of some matter or is uninterested in what the truth about it may be. We often do. But to say or claim that one wants the untruth about something smacks of a logical paradox' (1994, p. 61). Another well-known passage in *Beyond Good and Evil* seems to suggest that Nietzsche is not that interested in providing a *theory* of truth at all! He states that:

'The falseness of a judgement is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgement; it is here that our new language perhaps sounds strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life-preserving, perhaps even species-breeding ...to recognize untruth as a condition of life: that, to be sure, means to resist customary value-sentiments in a dangerous fashion; and a philosophy which ventures to do so places itself, by that act alone, beyond good and evil' (BGE 4).

Nehamas (1985, p. 55) explains very well what is going on here. For Nietzsche 'the falsest judgements (which include the synthetic judgements *a priori*) are the most indispensable for us'. But, 'he does not propose that indispensability or the promotion and cultivation of life replace "correspondence with the facts"' as our conception of the nature of truth. Similarly, 'we should not, if at all possible, take a philosophy that wants to recognize untruth as a condition of life' to offer a different analysis of truth according to which our most fundamental beliefs are, after all, true (*ibid.*). Such a claim is not in any recognizable sense a theory of truth that aims to explain that concept or give a general characterization of it.

Mary Warnock in her essay on 'Nietzsche's conception of Truth' in Pasley, 1978 (30) argues that Nietzsche does, at least sometimes, analyse truth in a pragmatic way. She

portrays Nietzsche as being in a state of confusion. When talking about individual propositions he seems to be using truth in the traditional realist sense. And yet when he goes on to consider scientific theories he falls back on the pragmatic theory (see in particular section 3 of her essay). Professor David Cooper (1983) responds to this interpretation by saying that: 'It would be strange if there were this bifurcation in Nietzsche's use, since in many passages anticipating the views of Quine he is keen to deny any sharp distinction between belief and theory'. Reading Nietzsche's various remarks more carefully and given what the various writers on Nietzsche's philosophy of truth have argued (especially Nehamas), *I am forced to the conclusion that Nietzsche does not give a pragmatic analysis of truth*. Rather, he takes the traditional realist account of truth as his starting point and proceeds from there. The lesson to be learnt at this stage of our argument is that we must not confuse Nietzsche's analysis of truth with what he says about the usefulness of the notion for us human beings.

What we desperately need is an alternative to the crude pragmatic theory which Arthur Danto ascribes to Nietzsche. The most promising candidate would appear to be the coherence theory of truth. This theory takes truth to consist in a relation amongst beliefs (themselves) rather than a relation between beliefs and the world. In what follows, I shall be considering whether there is any evidence to back the claim that Nietzsche espoused a coherence theory of truth. This need to be distinguished, of course, from the more basic question of whether Nietzsche's view on truth is a coherent one.

### **Nietzsche and the Coherence theory**

First of all, let me say a bit more about what a coherence theory of truth consists of. David Nyberg (1993) once again provides a good initial summary. He tells us that: 'This is the big picture view of truth, characteristic of great rationalist systems in metaphysics (accounts of reality as a whole) or in mathematics and physics. The idea is that you can't say that a statement, or a judgment, is true unless you can say that it coheres with a system of other statements. Every true statement, then, is a member of a system of other true statements, and all of them are tied together logically' (31).

So the notion of a context or system plays a vital role here in the account one gives of truth or knowledge. For the sake of convenience, I shall focus on the views of F H Bradley and the criticisms made of his position by Lord Russell.

Bradley's view (this part of his theory is essentially Hegelian) is that judgement consists in subsuming reality under ideas. 'Apart from our knowledge that we have experience, no knowledge of the reality so "given" is possible without the prior subsumption of it under ideas.' (Hamlyn, 1971, p. 123). Knowledge of reality is never immediate, but always mediated. There is, unfortunately, no direct route to reality so as to make it possible to compare our judgements with it; all that we can do is match our judgements with one another. Hence, the idealism and the monism since what we build up in this way is a system of related and hopefully coherent ideas; and divisions or distinctions that we take to obtain within experience will not be objective ones, independent of our thinking; they will be functions of that system of ideas. As Bradley himself expresses it: 'Truth is an ideal expression of the Universe, at once coherent and comprehensive. It must not conflict with itself and there must be no suggestion which fails to fall inside it. Perfect truth, in short, must realize the idea of a systematic whole' (Bradley, 1914).

Richard Wollheim, in his monograph on Bradley (32) points to a characteristic weakness in this idealist philosopher's position overall. 'From the disproof of Incorrigeability, the truth of the Coherence theory is supposed to follow. But the connexion between the two is not so clear as Bradley would have it. It is perfectly permissible to reject a view of knowledge as consisting either of indubitable premises or of what follows deductively from the premises and yet not rush into the view that knowledge is an enclosed system containing within itself its own guarantee'.

A D Woozley also reminds us in his classic *Theory of Knowledge* (1949) that: 'Coherence as a criterion of truth would be quite compatible with the view that truth is correspondence' (p. 155). There does seem to be a confusion in Bradley's thought here. It might be articulated as follows. Bradley claims to offer a criterial account of truth. But he also offers a view of what truth itself is, a definitional account. These two accounts are supposed to fit together in his system. But, as Professor Wollheim rightly suggests:



‘...in so far as the rejection of Incorrigeability gives any support to the Coherence theory, it supports it only in a weak and impoverished form. A proposition is true, we might now wish to say, not in so far as it corresponds to fact, but in so far as it coheres with other propositions. But we must ask, with which propositions? For propositions conflict and which are privileged? And to this question, the only answer seems to be *true* propositions. But to accept this answer would be the theory’s ruin as a self-subsistent theory of Truth, for it would mean that in its formulation there was employed the very notion that it attempts to explain’ (Wollheim, 1969, p. 171).

So it is not surprising, then, that many philosophers who have been concerned with the Coherence theory have challenged the idea that the theory offers an account of the nature of truth on the grounds that taken that way the theory is patently false (e.g. Bertrand Russell, 1907). Russell criticized Bradley and his followers, saying that many sets of beliefs can be equally coherent and yet they may compete with one another, for example the delusional world of Judge Schreber (see Freud’s famous case history, Pelican Freud Library, volume 9) or the fictional world of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. Which of these is to count as knowledge? It looks as if we fall into some sort of subjectivist/relativist position at this point.

The whole debate here is closely bound up with opposing metaphysical positions about the point of having beliefs. Our common-sense empiricism inclines us to regard forming sets of beliefs as a way of getting to know about reality through sensory information. The coherentist, by contrast, will reject this Lockean realist picture and put in its place a picture of the mind as, so to speak, ‘making up reality’ through forming coherent belief sets.

Dr M Clark (1990), in her comprehensive coverage starting on p. 34 of her text, points out that many contemporary philosophers do, in fact, opt for a coherence theory of truth because: ‘We cannot even confirm the simple belief that it is raining just by looking out of the window. We would, for instance, need a different explanation for our observation of falling water if we believed the sky was completely clear. Since experience thus fails to give the sort of access to reality unmediated by our other beliefs that would allow us to compare beliefs directly to reality...Insofar as sense experience justifies a

belief, it does so only indirectly through considerations of equilibrium (coherence) affecting the field [the system of beliefs] as a whole’.

Donald Davidson, following in Quine’s footsteps, also argues for a coherence theory. In one of his many articles he writes (33): ‘Nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except an other belief’. In other words, objects may cause beliefs, but only other beliefs (e.g. about objects) can justify beliefs (Leiter, 1998, p. 355).

Such anti-foundationalist stances might be taken as indicating some sympathy for Nietzsche’s supposed rejection of all correspondence theories, but this is not the case. Maudemarie Clark herself opts for a position quite close to Davidson and other contemporary epistemologists. She views coherence as acceptable as a criterion of knowledge (i.e. as a way of testing claims to knowledge) but it is not that in which knowledge consists. The nature of truth gets defined in the same way *mutatis mutandis* (see Clark, 1990, pp 35 – 40 for a more detailed explanation of this point).

As already stated above, the coherence theory of truth is closely bound up with idealism. Bradley’s position seems close to Hegel’s absolute idealism, but there is also Berkeley’s and Schopenhauer’s more subjective idealism which could be used to defend a coherence theory of truth. If nothing exists beyond beliefs, representations, language or text (Derrida) then, of course, there is nothing to which these things could correspond. Coherence, therefore, for writers like Berkeley and Schopenhauer is still a possible explanation of the nature of truth. Now, Nietzsche would have every reason to reject the classical correspondence theory and go for the coherence theory instead, if he wholeheartedly embraced subjective idealism. But already in ‘Truth and Lie’ Nietzsche is suspicious of all forms of idealism, and his subsequent work seems to confirm this. Clark maintains in Chapters 4 and 5 of her book that in his later work Nietzsche definitely rejects subjective idealism. This leaves a way open for him to accept some variant of the correspondence theory of truth. And so we arrive at the Correspondence theory itself. Two versions of this are to be encountered in the secondary literature – the Metaphysical Correspondence Theory and the Minimal Correspondence theory. I shall discuss these separately, starting with the Metaphysical Correspondence theory.

## **Nietzsche's rejection of the Metaphysical Correspondence theory**

Nietzsche applied his critical scalpel to metaphysics. Any such transcultural or extrahistorical reality was to be eschewed. No doubt Nietzsche was conversant with Schopenhauer's definition of metaphysics: 'By metaphysics I understand all so-called knowledge that goes beyond the possibility of experience, and so beyond nature...in order to give information about that by which, in some sense or other, this experience or nature is conditioned, or in popular language, about that which is hidden behind nature, and renders nature possible' (*World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 164) (34).

In HAH, Nietzsche tends to be dismissive of the idea of the existence of a transcendent world. In section 9 he writes:

'It is true there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed. We behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head; while the question nonetheless remains what of the world would still be there if one had cut it off...

'For one could assert nothing at all of the metaphysical world except that it was a being-other, an inaccessible, incomprehensible being-other; it would be a thing with negative qualities. Even if the existence of such a world were never so well demonstrated, it is certain that knowledge of it would be the most useless of all knowledge: more useless even than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck' (Hollingdale trans.).

Since Plato's time, Nietzsche claims, the metaphysical, the unchanging world of abstract truths has been brandished against life itself as it was experienced. Metaphysical realities were invoked in contrast to everyday actualities. The mature Nietzsche indicted the philosophers in the great Western tradition for seeking a transcendent solution to life's meaning.

Early on in BT and TL Nietzsche was under the spell of Schopenhauer and affected by his reading of Kant. He therefore still believed that there were some ultimate facts, some non-interpretative truths concerning the real nature of the world. But he denied that these facts could ever be correctly stated through reason or language. Already in 'Truth

and Lie' we find him rejecting Kant's 'things in themselves' as a contradictory notion. The Kantians had a faith in some mysterious X which was more than the fruits of human agreement (35). Our ordinary experiences were characterized as mere appearance and not as 'the really Real' (36). Science was also confined to appearances in the Kantian system. Now Nietzsche sought to cut off the really Real and save appearances. So the idea of the absolute character of the really Real was banished altogether. We can see this move exhibited in the following oft-quoted passage from *The Gay Science* (Book One, section 154):

'What is "appearance" for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance? Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown X or remove from it'.

If Nietzsche was hesitant about metaphysics in HAH, by the time he got to BGE he was firmly opposed to it. Any such notion of transcendent truth was ruled out of court. The following passage from BGE is typical. He writes:

'There are still harmless self-observers who believe "immediate certainties" exist, for example "I think" or, as was Schopenhauer's superstition, "I will": as though knowledge here got hold of its object pure and naked as "thing in itself" and no falsification occurred either on the side of the subject or on that of the object. But I shall reiterate a hundred times that "immediate certainty", like "absolute knowledge" and "thing in itself", contains a *contradictio in adjecto*: we really ought to get free from the seduction of words' (BGE 16).

Nietzsche also makes it clear in several other places that he finds the classical correspondence theory of truth to be wanting. As Richard Schacht reads him: '...it cannot be the case that the "truth" of any such propositions, and indeed of any propositions at all, is a matter of their standing in a correspondence-relation to a reality that has an intrinsic structural articulation and ordering, since there is no such reality for propositions to correspond to. The world as he conceives it has the character of becoming rather than of "being", of flux rather than structure, and at bottom of "chaos" in the sense of the absence of an inherent immutable order of any sort...And if this is so, no

version of the correspondence theory presupposing the existence of what he calls a “true world” of being can stand’ (Schacht, 1983, pp 61 – 62). As will become clear later on, I do not agree with Schacht here. For Nietzsche has just exchanged one metaphysics for another. This may apply to the early works of Nietzsche, while he was still very much under the influence of Schopenhauer, but I shall maintain that Nietzsche eventually disposed of the ‘chaos of sensations’ metaphysics also.

It is important to realize at this point that interpreters such as Schacht, Danto, Cooper, etc. acknowledge the existence of only one type of correspondence theory, namely the Metaphysical Correspondence theory. So their argumentative strategy is fairly similar. Breazeale (1990) agrees that ‘Nietzsche came at the problems with a “deep and abiding commitment” to the correspondence ideal’, that is, that truth must somehow represent the really Real world, but he seems to change to a view ‘of the metaphysically real world as a primal unformed chaos’ (37). Nietzsche himself noted his progression beyond the Kantian thing in itself in one of the early fragments:

‘We far too readily confuse Kant’s thing in itself with the Buddhists’ “true essence of things”. On the one hand actuality exhibits nothing but illusion; on the other, it exhibits an appearance which is totally adequate to the truth. Illusion as non-being is confused with the appearance of beings. All possible superstitions find a place in this vacuum’ (Breazeale, 1990, p. 41).

Breazeale helps to unravel this passage in a footnote. He tells us that ‘The difference here is between the view that we can learn something about the true essence of things by considering the world as an adequate expression or appearance...of this essence (The Buddhist view), and the view that the world gives us no warrant for claiming any knowledge of the true essence of things, a view which forces us to conclude that the world of appearances is an illusion. The latter is *supposed* to be Kant’s position... (Breazeale, 1990, pp 41 – 42).

At any rate, this group of commentators, Schacht, Cooper, Danto, etc. claim that this *dual perspective* was announced by Nietzsche and he never really gave it up in all his later published works. Reality as we “know it” in Kantian terms was “illusion”, that is, something created by the knowers. But there was no way to jump over the objects of

appearance to “know” a non-illusive metaphysical reality (38). Now what is so fascinating about Maudemarie Clark’s reading is that she is able to challenge this Schacht–Cooper view, arguing that it does not exhaust all the alternatives. In Chapter 4 of her book, she constructs what seems to be a more coherent and exegetically cogent account. Her view is that Nietzsche’s later texts do not, on balance, support an interpretation of him as espousing a relativistic view of truth or reality, and that his purposes are better served by a realistic interpretation. Just because Nietzsche rejects the idea of ‘the thing in itself’ as confused, is no reason to assume that he would deny that many of our beliefs are true. Dr Clark’s argument here is very detailed, so only the salient notions will be selected out and commented upon. She claims that in the works written after BGE, that is starting with *On the Genealogy of Morals*, there is no further argument for the ‘truth is an illusion’ view, or that science, logic or mathematics falsify reality. One might agree with this, but Nietzsche’s reasons may be that he has simply exhausted the topic. Notice how in the *Genealogy* he refers us back to what he said earlier in *The Gay Science* and in *Daybreak* (see GM, Essay 3, section 24 for example). And, of course, in *The Gay Science* he does maintain that truths are illusions. More recently, Ronald Hayman (1997) has also noted the alteration in Nietzsche’s stance, although he locates the shift as occurring slightly earlier, that is in BGE. See Preface, above, p. vii, on this. My own view is that Clark’s position is more accurate, because Nietzsche is still talking about using masks in BGE.

To substantiate her thesis, Clark focuses in particular on *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*. It is true, as she says, that in these two short works Nietzsche no longer claims that science falsified reality. This seems right for there is a section in TI (section 3, ‘Reason in Philosophy’) which lauds empiricism. Nietzsche comments:

‘And what subtle instruments for observation we possess in our senses! This nose, for example, of which no philosopher has hitherto spoken with respect and gratitude, is nonetheless the most delicate tool we have at our command: it can detect minimal differences in movement which even the spectroscope cannot detect. We possess scientific knowledge today to precisely the extent that we have decided to accept the evidence of the senses...The rest is abortion and not yet science – in

other words metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology...' (TI, section 3, Penguin trans., p. 46).

Examples of aborted doctrines might be the systems of Plato, Descartes and Schopenhauer, who all claim that the senses deceive us. They afford us only appearance, not reality.

A major stumbling block for Clark's neo-Kantian reading of Nietzsche on truth is the previous section to the one I have just quoted from in TI (i.e. 'Reason in Philosophy', section 2). Surely the following passage from this section affords evidence that Nietzsche still believes that concepts falsify the real? He singles out the dark philosopher as deserving special praise:

'I set apart with high reverence the name of Heraclitus. When the rest of the philosopher crowd rejected the evidence of the senses because these showed plurality and change, he rejected their evidence because they showed things as if they possessed duration and unity. Heraclitus too was unjust to the senses which lie neither in the way the Eleatics believe nor as he believed – they do not lie at all. It is what we make of their evidence that first introduces a lie into it, for example, the lie of unity, the lie of materiality of substance, of duration... "Reason" is the cause of our falsification of the evidence of the senses. In so far as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie...But Heraclitus will always be right in this, that being is an empty fiction. The "apparent" world is the only one: the "real" world has only been lyingly added' (Penguin version, p. 94).

Note: I explore further the influence of Heraclitus on Nietzsche in an Appendix to Chapter 3 called 'Nietzsche's Vision' (see below).

I must confess that on first reading this I took it as obviously favouring the Schacht-Cooper view. If Nietzsche says 'being is an empty fiction', the situation seems dire. The only saving grace is that Nietzsche retains the apparent world. But Maudemarie Clark is undaunted by this seeming *volte face*. She offers what is undoubtedly a brilliant analysis of this section. She reminds us that 'In works after BT Nietzsche denies the existence of non-conceptual knowledge. But concepts always involve unity and some level of permanence. One cannot know something as a desk...if one merely apprehends a

chaos of sensation' (Clark, 1990, p. 106). In explaining 'reason' as the cause of our falsification of the testimony of the senses, Clark takes Nietzsche to refer to 'pure reason', the faculty of a-priori knowledge. But Nietzsche denies the existence of such a non-natural faculty. Philosophers like Arthur Danto would take this section as evidence that Nietzsche rejects the notion of a thing altogether. But Clark argues that what is being rejected is metaphysical things, not our ordinary notion of a thing. What Nietzsche is attacking is 'the metaphysical concept of substance, the concept of an unchanging substrate that underlies all change' (p. 107, *ibid.*). But Richardson challenges Clark's evidence for this distinction (Richardson, 1996, p. 77, Note 6). However, there are many other passages in any case where Nietzsche implies the distinction.

Nietzsche here highlights becoming only because philosophers up until now (Heraclitus excepted) have always stressed being. But they can only get away with this by denying the evidence of their senses and trying to persuade us that these mislead us. Plato is the archetypal figure in this regard. (I discuss the topic of becoming vs being further in the Appendix to Chapter 3, below.) Nietzsche sides with naturalism and empiricism in the face of such rationalism. Clark's conclusion is that the concepts Nietzsche calls 'lies' are quite dispensable. They show up not in common -sense beliefs or in the sciences, but rather in the a-priori philosophical disciplines Nietzsche has rejected as 'abortion' in the quotation above. Only metaphysical things are rejected.

Another impediment to Clark's empiricist/realist reading is the brilliant chapter in *Twilight of the Idols* called 'How the real world at last became a myth'. It carries the subtitle 'History of an error'. If we read the Real World as 'truth', surely this provides more evidence that Nietzsche still holds on to the falsificationist thesis? Nietzsche's narration consists of six stages, six different perspectives on the 'Real World', in contrast to this world of ours which is taken to be apparent only. The interpretation of the first three perspectives is relatively uncontroversial. Whereas Plato has promised the 'Real World' as accessible to the sage – Christianity only promised it to the repentant sinner after her death. Kant, going a stage further, declared that it could not be proved at all, let alone promised, though it was still a consoling possibility bearing with it a moral duty. With that, the ascent, as it were, is completed. One can interpret Stage 4 as referring to Comte,



the father of Positivism, for whom the unknown, the unverifiable, is of no interest. How could the 'unattainable' be an obligation for so-called rational creatures – whilst to the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human*, any idea of the 'Real World' is frankly unacceptable? This gets confirmed in *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil* (Stage 5). No-one disputes that Nietzsche places his own philosophy in Stage 6. In a famous passage he writes:

'We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps?...But NO, with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!...'

According to Erich Heller (39) 'he means the world of *ideas* or the Beyond, the only really Real worlds that have dominated many of our philosophies and religions ever since Plato...as distinct from the world of our ordinary experience. But then Nietzsche gets rid of the apparent world as well'. Heller asks: 'Are we to respond by saying: "How true! The distinction between a true world and an apparent world, and thereby between true and false, is false"'? (p. 168). It is at this point that the conflict of interpretations comes to a head. Bernd Magnus interprets Stage 6 to mean that the illusory or apparent world gets wiped out as well. His position echoes that of Schacht and Cooper when he reduces 'this world' to 'an aimless becoming in which all ultimate distinctions between veridical and delusory disappear' (Magnus, 1978, p. 137). Clark's discussion centres round the fact that with the abolition of the 'really Real world', all basis is lost for regarding the empirical world as illusory. It's just that Nietzsche himself doesn't latch on to this fact straight away. Clark's only response to Magnus is to say that she cannot find any textual basis for his reading. Clark means, in the published writings (see Clark, 1990, p. 115). Her own view can be simply stated. When Nietzsche denies the really Real or 'true' world, that does not mean he denies truth. This fits in very well with the previously quoted passages from BGE, praising observation and the senses. Clark therefore reads Nietzsche's 'History of an Error' as further evidence for her own account of his views on truth. I find her argumentation here very convincing.

One nagging doubt remains. Why did Nietzsche take so long to realize that his dismissal of absolute truth did not impugn our more ordinary sense of truth? Once again,

Clark comes up with a brilliant reply to this: Schopenhauer's representationalism. She draws our attention back to a section from Book One of *The Gay Science* which I have already quoted from. Notice how Nietzsche concludes this section (54):

'Appearance is for me that which lives and is effective and goes so far in its self-mockery that it makes me feel that this is appearance and will-o-the-wisp and a dance of spirits and nothing more – that among all these dreamers, I too, who "know", am dancing my dance; that the knower is a means for prolonging the earthly dance and thus belongs to the masters of ceremony of existence; and that the sublime consistency and inter-relatedness of all knowledge perhaps is and will be the highest means to preserve the universality of dreaming and the mutual comprehension of all dreamers and thus also the continuation of the dream'

(Kaufmann (trans.), p. 116).

Clearly, even at this late stage, Nietzsche draws the conclusion from his rejection of the thing in itself that *life is a dream*. He is still tied to subjective idealism. 'As the dream exists only for the dreamer, the world exists only for the knower.' The world has no separate existence. Passages such as this confirm for Clark that Nietzsche continued to hold a representational view of knowing just as he had done earlier in BT and TL. But, after he rejected 'non-empirical routes of access to the world (i.e. after BT)', representationalism allowed him a choice between the Kantian things in themselves or a subjective idealism of the Schopenhauerian variety. But the things in themselves are unknowable from our perspective. The world is always hidden from the knower by the representation. Its essence is forever independent of what can be known of it. It is the mysterious X once again. We are left only with our representations, and it is but a short step from there to subjective idealism.

Another puzzle surfaces at this point. Now that things in themselves have been discredited, to what can our representations any longer *fail to correspond to*? The only available answer seems to be the 'chaos of sensations' metaphysic put forward by Schacht and Wilcox. But the main source of evidence for this view comes from the later *Nachlass* (i.e. the *Will to Power* notes). Schacht's whole book is vitiated (in my opinion) by an over-reliance on these unpublished notes. Cooper also draws on WP 569 to

substantiate his points. But a similar set of ideas are to be found in the published works. In a well-known section in *The Gay Science* (section 354). Nietzsche informs us that:

‘Owing to the nature of animal consciousness, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface -and-sign world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious becomes by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities and generalisation. Ultimately, the growth of consciousness becomes a danger; and anyone who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows that it is a disease’ (Kaufmann trans., p. 300).

Cooper’s passage from the *Will to Power* bequest expresses similar sentiments (40). Nietzsche is here agreeing with Kierkegaard that language falsifies ‘reality’ and yet we have to do this for utilitarian reasons. ‘The fuzziness and chaos of sense impressions are, as it were, logicized’ (WP 569). Things get reduced to rough outlines for the purposes of communication.

According to Clark (1990, p. 121), ‘the specific features of knowledge GS and BGE pick out as falsifying reality are ones Kant construed as *a priori*: mathematics, logic and the concepts of substance and causality. Nietzsche therefore dismantles Kant’s original structure and replaces it with a more naturalized account. He draws on evolutionary theory at this point, which was not available to Kant. Following Helmholtz and Lange he attempts to explicate the categories in relation to the development of the brain. We can now make better sense of why he still held the falsification view in *The Gay Science*. In Clark’s words: ‘If the data of sensation constitute reality, the a-priori features the brain’s organization imposes on sensations falsify reality, making it appear to have features it does not actually possess’. Things too, on this account, are constructs. They are nowhere to be found in the sense impressions themselves (Hume’s point as well). By the time he gets to TI, Nietzsche regards only the metaphysical notion of a substance as a falsification – the idea of a thing that does not change. Again, Clark seems to be on the right track when she states: ‘The most basic assumption underlying Nietzsche’s claim that the idea of an enduring thing falsifies reality is his identification of reality with the chaos of

sensation. But why would Nietzsche identify reality with the chaos? His representationalism provides an answer' (Clark, *ibid.*, p. 122).

But there are still a few issues that need resolving. How do we know that the chaos of sensations really exists as its extra-mental? Nietzsche seems to claim that we know of it indirectly by empirical means. Schopenhauer and Lange had already claimed that empirical studies show that we construct the world by imposing a-priori forms on the matter of sensation. A possible inconsistency about the nature of reality here is also pointed out by Fr Copleston in his study, and I discuss this further in the Appendix to Chapter 3 below.

It is at this juncture that Clark plays her trump card, for she spots a major flaw in this way of justifying the strong falsification thesis. Nietzsche realizes this himself also in BGE, 15. He writes:

'If one is to pursue physiology with a good conscience one is compelled to insist that the organs of sense are not phenomena in the sense of idealist philosophy: for if they were they could not be causes!...What? And others even go so far as to say that the external world is the work of our organs? But then our body, as a piece of this external world, would be the work of our organs! This, it seems to me, is a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, supposing that the concept *causa sui* is something altogether absurd. Consequently, the external world is NOT the work of our organs'.

Clark's gloss on this crucial passage is as follows and is in effect a plea for objectivity. She rightly, in my opinion (41) argues that: 'One cannot consistently give a physiological account of the role of sensations in knowledge and yet reduce to arrangements of sense data the sense organs presupposed by that account...'. If we are to give an empirical account, we have to presuppose the existence of real, independently existing things, e.g. sense organs, brains, bodies and so on. Clark justifiably concludes that: 'It follows that empirical accounts cannot provide a basis for equating reality with the chaos of sensations, since they must presuppose that sense organs and bodies are real' (Clark, 1990, p. 123). This would entail that Nietzsche has no grounds for the claim that the a-priori aspects of knowledge *falsify reality*, nor has he managed to settle once and for all the status of the

'chaos of sensation' viewpoint. If he were to retain this idea, then we would have to ascribe a metaphysical position to him. Clark's detailed analysis convinces me that Nietzsche was misled by Schopenhauer and representationalism here. Only gradually did it dawn on him that '*the non-chaotic world is not illusion*'. The senses are 'given'; they are not mere representations. Nietzsche, as BGE 15 shows, eventually abandoned representationalism and the 'chaos of sensation' metaphysics. Clark also remarks elsewhere in her study how representationalism was the main culprit in the early TL essay, and not certain theses concerning language. But I shall not discuss this any further at this late stage. We can safely conclude, then, that there are no transcendent truths or extra-historical realities. Nietzsche now viewed these as just escapist fantasies. We are just left with the truths of history and psychology, as in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The real world is now approached more from a psychological angle. I shall pick up on this theme and explore it further in Chapter 3 below.

Finally we come to The Minimal Correspondence theory.

### **The Minimal Correspondence theory of Truth**

This is just the common-sense version of the Correspondence theory. It bears a close resemblance to what Paul Horwich in his well-known book calls a *deflationary* account of truth (42). Such minimalist theories of truth downplay philosophical problems about truth. Their view is simple:

Thesis – For the truth apt, say no more than  $s$  is true iff  $p$

where  $p$  translates  $s$

In other words, Tarski's disquotational schema tells us all one need to know once we have solved the problem of truth aptness. But as Professor Mark Sainsbury pointed out in his lectures, solving the problem of truth aptness can be difficult. As far as I can recall, he opted for Utterances as the central case of truth aptness. Truth is an entity abstracted from the words people use. Tarski's schema is a biconditional, e.g. 'Snow is white' is true iff snow is white.

For Schacht, Clark, Cooper and many other commentators, this ‘equivalence principle’ ‘derived from Tarski’s Convention T, expresses our surest intuition regarding truth’. The Minimal Correspondence theory, as already indicated, would require the rejection of subjective idealism. So Berkeley’s *esse est percipi* would be deemed unacceptable and a common-sense realism affirmed instead. We have also concluded in the previous section that the world about which we have beliefs exists separate from us, and cannot be reduced to the occurrence of our representations (43).

So, given the world’s independent existence: ‘Snow is white’ corresponds to the world iff snow is white. Now, Maudemarie Clark in her influential study attributes this sort of conventional view of truth to Nietzsche. He clearly rejects metaphysical realism and seems closer to what is nowadays referred to as *anti-realism*. Her claim is that Nietzsche, at least sometimes, is making ordinary assertions, that is presenting something as true and not merely putting it forward just to deconstruct it (Derrida). Clark at one point described Nietzsche’s position as a sort of moderate realism, and this seems a more accurate assessment.

But one needs to be on one’s guard here. It is very easy to confuse one’s own ideas regarding truth with those of Nietzsche himself. I concur with Dr Clark that a moderate realist position seems a sensible stance to adopt. Indeed, I have already presupposed this stance in criticizing the content of the ‘Truth and Lie’ essay earlier on.

I favour a version of this theory put forward by the American philosopher Hilary Putnam (44). He argues: ‘There is a real world but we can only describe it in terms of our own conceptual system’ (*Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, p. 32). There is no ‘God’s Eye View’ or absolute objectivity. Professor Putnam’s own realist intuitions are set within a theory which he labels a ‘demythologized Kantianism’. It is also often referred to as Internal Realism. Internal Realism is basically what’s left when one removes from metaphysical realism all that Putnam considers to be erroneous and pernicious. Putnam’s ‘mind-independent reality’ is equivalent to Kant’s *noumena*. However, Putnam, in his own work, just interprets the noumenal world as simply what a rational being with our sense apparatus would construct. There is a way in which, not arbitrarily, but *inevitably*, human beings must interpret their surroundings. So, Putnam’s

internal realism turns out to be much like Kant's transcendental idealism as described by Scruton, Allison, Gardner, etc. At one level, within the empirical domain, truth can be viewed as correspondence with the facts, but at another level, all truth is in the end *mind based*. Notice, also, the similarity to the views espoused by David Hamlyn already cited in this chapter. Both writers do not leave themselves open to a charge of complete relativism or conventionalism. Putnam, too, would undoubtedly see such a position as ultimately self-defeating. For it is inconsistent both to maintain a point of view and at the same time argue that no viewpoint is more justifiable than any other. It also makes it impossible to hold to a distinction between being correct and thinking one is correct. No argument can be carried on, on that basis.

But what concerns us here is whether such a theory can be pinned on Nietzsche. It is true that from time to time Nietzsche does speak as if he espoused this common-sense realist view. In TL he talks about the things themselves, as opposed to the things in themselves. In HAH 3 he writes:

'It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men which blind us and make us happy'.

The main piece of evidence is to be found in the opening section of the First Essay *On the Genealogy of Morals* where Nietzsche hopes 'that these microscopic researchers of the soul...have taught themselves to sacrifice all wishfulness to truth, to every truth, even the simple, bitter, ugly, repulsive, un-Christian, immoral truth...for such truths do exist' (GM, D Smith, trans., 1996).

In *The Anti-Christ* (A 50) we find the following passage:

'Truth has had to be fought for every step of the way, almost every thing else dear to our hearts, on which our love and our trust in life depend, has had to be sacrificed to it. Greatness of soul is needed for it: the service of truth is the hardest service.'

Even as late as *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche asks:

'How much truth can a spirit bear, how much truth can a spirit dare? That became for me more and more the real measure of value.'

Later in the same work, in the section entitled 'Why I am Destiny', he says:

'...what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue' (Hollingdale trans., 1979).

The trouble is that there are just as many passages which still appear to argue that truth is an illusion. Commentators like Schacht and Thiele have even more evidence for this because they utilize the discarded *Will to Power* notes. Clark is forced to concede that Nietzsche, even in these late works, writes *as if* his position on truth is the radical one. One way round this is to argue that 'the illusion' refers to metaphysical truth, or as Sebastian Gardner alternatively expresses it: '...not that truth is an illusion, but that it is an illusion that the will to truth is autonomous – it is rather a function, the latest expression, of the ascetic ideal' (45).

As Nietzsche doesn't define truth himself, perhaps the safest conclusion to draw is that he doesn't have a fully worked out theory of truth. This is not to claim that he didn't believe in truth (46). The passages given in evidence above clearly show that he did, at least some of the time. But Nietzsche deliberately (perhaps) obfuscates matters. He wants the reader to make up their own mind concerning what truth is. Notice also how Clark on p. 40 of her text admits her sympathy with some recent American commentators such as Bernd Magnus and Alexander Nehamas who avoid attributing to Nietzsche any theory of truth at all. She confesses that: 'The conception of truth I attribute to Nietzsche certainly does not count as a "theory" in a very strong sense. It consists merely in a number of connected assertions about truth which I find implicit in Nietzsche's later works as well as in our ordinary beliefs about truth'.

Perhaps Maudemarie Clark has done what Nietzsche would have expected of her. She has worked out her own theory of truth using Nietzsche's texts as fodder and ended up a neo-Kantian empirical realist.

But what, then, are we to conclude about Nietzsche's various pronouncements about truth? The simple answer is that Nietzsche is not that interested in theories of truth. His primary concerns are not epistemological or cognitive. Gemes, in his article, is critical of writers like Schacht, Wilcox and Clark because they '...make Nietzsche appear less



interesting and original than he is. It gives us a Nietzsche who is merely rehashing familiar Kantian themes, minus the rigor of Kant's exposition'.

Another problem with these cognitivist approaches, as Gemes sees it, is that they lack sensitivity with regard to the context of much of Nietzsche's published remarks on truth. He is often criticizing the presuppositions of the great philosophers of the past. His purpose is overtly polemical. Gemes' conclusion is that: 'To treat Nietzsche as developing a philosophical account of the notion of truth is, to some degree, to ignore his expressly rhetorical intent of using his audience's received notions of truth in order to subvert their wider *Weltanschauung*'. But why not both? Traditionally, rhetoric has been tied to the art of persuasion and has no necessary relation to the truth. But then, how are we to explain all the empiricist/naturalistic material already discussed above? Both elements are involved. For it would be equally difficult to substantiate the thesis that *all* Nietzsche's epistemological remarks are for rhetorical effect only (see Leiter, 1998, p. 339).

It may be helpful at this point to draw a distinction between theories *of* truth and theories *about* truth. A theory *of* truth, like the correspondence theory, attempts to give a univocal definition of truth; truth is correspondence to fact, etc. Part of such a theory might be the contention that theories of truth are not possible or, more weakly, that they may not be possible. Let us take the latter as our starting point. Although it may not be possible to have a theory of truth, we can still investigate the part that the concept of truth plays in our thinking. We might conclude, for example, that people put a very high value on truth, perhaps the highest. We might think that there is evidence to say that people have a need to believe certain things true because such beliefs are useful and promote human existence. Perhaps also certain beliefs are indispensable and we cannot not believe them – at least within a certain period of history. The necessity here is a necessity to be believed, i.e. a psychological necessity. (One is reminded, of course, of Hume's psychological account of causation. In Hume's case the will to truth in philosophy leads to scepticism.) So far, this is but speculative psychology, but we can make such observations properly philosophical by showing the role such beliefs play in our conceptual articulations. This will form the subject matter of the rest of this study, where I

discuss such notions as will to power, perspectivism and interpretation. It may not much matter if Nietzsche 'is merely rehashing familiar Kantian themes' in his epistemology, if his primary concerns and true originality lie elsewhere. Gemes, it seems to me, is underestimating Nietzsche's achievement in the cognitive domain. He is not just 'rehashing' Kantian themes. I argued above that Nietzsche dismantles the Kantian edifice brick by brick (Cooper's phrase) and replaces it with something much more *a posteriori*. The *Ding an Sich* is rejected as a futile notion and transcendental arguments are replaced by naturalistic ones. We have to remind ourselves that there are many references to Kant in Nietzsche's works and the greater part of them are hostile. Nietzsche puts much more emphasis on the body and was highly critical of Kant's moral philosophy. So I agree more with Leiter when he says that the themes are not exactly Kantian (Leiter, 1998), p. 351. Gemes' remarks, then, seem unfair to Nietzsche. If he were a mere rhetorician he would *only* be of interest to literary scholars, but Nietzsche is also tackling matters of philosophical interest and substance.

## Notes to Chapter 2 – Does Nietzsche have a theory of Truth?

- 1 *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul – a Study of Heroic Individualism* , Leslie Paul Thiele (1990) (see Introduction, p. 3).
- 2 The translation of this early unpublished essay, ‘On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense’, used throughout this study is the one by Daniel Breazeale (1990), and is available in his collection of Nietzsche’s early notebooks called *Philosophy and Truth*.
- 3 Stern’s essay on ‘Truth and Lie’ is called ‘Nietzsche and the Idea of Metaphor’ and is reprinted in the collection of articles edited by Malcolm Pasley entitled *Nietzsche – Imagery and Thought* (1978).
- 4 I have used some material here from *Nietzsche and Postmodernism* by Dave Robinson (1999), p. 16.
- 5 See Breazeale’s informative introduction, especially the sub-section entitled ‘Knowledge’ (p. xxix). For details, see Breazeale (1990) in Bibliography.
- 6 The reference is to p. 69 of Stern’s essay. See Note 3 above.
- 7 See essay 2 of UM, p. 121, for ‘Hygiene of Life’ reference, (Hollingdale, trans., 1983).
- 8 So what is the moral sense of lying? The ‘moral’ sense of lying is confined to violating the linguistic, lexical or semantic conventions men have set up in order to get on with each other as best they may (Stern essay, p. 67 – see Note 3 above). The truthful person abides by these conventions – uses the correct designations for things. See Clark, 1990 (p. 66) as well.
- 9 Again, the source is Stern, p. 72 (see Note 3 above).
- 10 As Breazeale (1990) points out (p. xxxi) in *Philosophy and Truth*, ‘Valuable material concerning Nietzsche’s understanding of the fundamentally rhetorical and metaphorical character of language is contained in the lectures on rhetoric he delivered at the University of Basel. These lectures have been published, along with an English translation, in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language* (1872, edited and translated 1989).

- 11 The political reform journalist and philosopher Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–75) was the one figure largely responsible for spreading Helmholtz’s view of Kant. In 1870 he was appointed Professor of philosophy at Zurich. Lange’s enormously influential *History of Materialism and Critique of its Meaning in the Present* was first published in 1866. This book was a forerunner of the neo-Kantian movement in German philosophy and it was also supportive of Schopenhauer’s position. We know Nietzsche read this. Lange used Kantian arguments to demolish the claims of nineteenth-century materialists to absolute knowledge. But he went further in also endorsing an entirely sceptical view of our cognitive capacities; Lange also took the Kantian ‘Copernican’ revolution entirely literally: ‘Our notions do not regulate themselves according to things, but things according to our notions. It follows immediately from this that the objects of experience altogether are only our objects; that the whole objective world is, in a word, not absolute objectivity but only objectivity for men’. Lange created in the name of Kant a quite new philosophy of neo-Kantianism. This neo-Kantian movement took various forms of empiricism and positivism. Lange’s *physiological* view of the categories (he attended lectures in physiology given by Helmholtz) and his rejection of all metaphysics, put him in the positivist camp.

Source: Dr Marilyn Nagy (1991), pp 68 – 69.

- 12 Clark (1990), pp 79 – 80. For a recent assessment of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, I refer the reader to Christopher Janaway’s (1994) Oxford Past Master paperback.
- 13 The reference is to p. 81 of the ‘Truth and Lie’ essay, in Breazeale (1990).
- 14 Professor Cooper’s (1986) book is simply called *Metaphor* (see p. 259). The phrase is Nietzsche’s own.
- 15 This work is one of those translated by Breazeale (1990) in his collection called *Philosophy and Truth*.
- 16 The reference to Wiggins is to be found in Cooper (1986) p. 261. Cooper’s book provides a good overview on the topic of metaphor.
- 17 Cooper (1986) p. 257 (Chapter IV, section D). The whole of this chapter is worth reading.

- 18 According to Cooper, Nietzsche viewed literal talk as a kind of frozen sediment of metaphor. It is a congealed metaphor.
- 19 Available in Davidson (1984).
- 20 According to Robert Solomon, *Continental Philosophy Since 1750*, (1988): ‘Hans Georg Gadamer (b. 1900) became the leading figure in hermeneutics, devoting his life to working out the method and much of contemporary continental philosophy (in France as well as in Germany) is indebted to his work’ (p. 169).
- 21 Stern essay in Pasley volume (see Note 3, above), pp 69 – 70.
- 22 See Chapter 3, Section d. This book was published by Macmillan, 1971. It is now out of print, but copies are still available in libraries.
- 23 For Nietzsche, a concept is just a ‘residue of metaphor’. See ‘Truth and Lie’ essay (Breazeale, 1990, top of p. 85).
- 24 Maudemarie Clark (1990) wonders whether Nietzsche is a consistent nominalist. See her discussion on p. 77.
- 25 ‘How can perception be metaphorical?’, asks Clark. ‘Isn’t metaphor concerned with language only?’
- 26 David Nyberg is an American philosopher of education and he has written a marvellous book on truth-telling and deceiving in ordinary life. It is called *The Varnished Truth* (1993). I have drawn my summaries of the coherence and pragmatist approaches from his Chapter 2.
- 27 Alexander Nehamas’s 1985 study of Nietzsche has been much praised. His discussion of whether Nietzsche held a pragmatic theory of truth is especially good, and it commences on p. 52 of the paperback edition.
- 28a Professor Cooper’s (1983) study of Nietzsche’s educational philosophy is called *Authenticity and Learning*. Chapter 5 is on Nietzsche’s philosophy of truth. See especially p. 74.
- 28b On Grimm’s view, see Clark, 1990 (p. 33), but there is also his own *Nietzsche’s Theory of Knowledge*, 1977.

- 29 The doctrine of double truth claimed that what is true in philosophy might be false in religion, and conversely. An intensive discussion of this issue took place in the Middle Ages. Averroes, a Muslim philosopher, was involved in the controversy.
- 30 This essay is available in the collection edited by Malcolm Pasley (1978). Baroness Warnock is particularly good on the Kantian and Humean background to the foreground of Nietzsche's thought.
- 31 See the reference in Note 26, above.
- 32 *F H Bradley* by Richard Wollheim, Peregrine Books, 1969. The discussion on truth starts on p. 167.
- 33 Davidson's paper is called 'A coherence theory of truth and knowledge' and is available in *Truth and Interpretation*, 1986.
- 34 How one defines metaphysics is obviously crucial here. I think Nietzsche sticks fairly close to the Kantian approach. But John Richardson (1996) gives a broader definition in terms of a systematic truth about essence (p. 3).
- 35 Breazeale gives reasons why the thing in itself is a contradictory notion based on the early *Nachlass* – see p. xxix of his introduction. As Clark wants to stick with the published works, she cites GS 54 instead.
- 36 The phrase 'the really Real' comes from Erich Heller's book called *The Importance of Nietzsche*. See Note 39 below for details.
- 37 See Breazeale's introduction to his edition of the early *Nachlass*, p. xxvii, footnote 12.
- 38 Professor David Cooper (1983) tells a similar story in his essay on truth in the earlier book he wrote about Nietzsche's educational philosophy (*Authenticity and Learning*). See especially Chapter 5, pp 70 – 71.
- 39 Heller's (1988) collection of ten essays take their title from the first essay called *The Importance of Nietzsche*. Michael Tanner describes this as a magisterial book on Nietzsche. My quotation is from essay 9 (p. 168). Professor Heller is an Emeritus Professor of German, so his basic approach is literary, but he has many interesting things to say about Nietzsche.

- 40 Cooper's 1983 study has already been referred to above in Note 38. See pp 70 – 71 for the quote from *The Will to Power*. Maudemarie Clark also mentions this particular passage from the late *Nachlass*, although she does not treat it as her primary source.
- 41 For a dissenting voice, see Nehamas (1988), in *Reading Nietzsche*, p. 47.
- 42 *Truth* by Paul Horwich, 1990.
- 43 Truth has traditionally been associated with objectivity. But Hegel and especially Kierkegaard, in the nineteenth century, put more emphasis on subjectivity. In fact, Kierkegaard defined truth as subjectivity. For him, the overriding truth was the individual's feeling of his own existence. But it turns out that Kierkegaard is primarily concerned with religious truth. The truth in Kierkegaard's words: 'is not introduced into the individual from without, but was within him'. His stress on inwardness was integral to what he meant by subjectivity. But this sounds more like faith than truth as traditionally understood. Kierkegaard's views are best put to one side, as they are too far from the standard definition. I was delighted to find support for this reaction in Robert Solomon's book called *The Passions* (1976). On p. 64 he writes: 'It is only from the standpoint of objectivity that the notions of "Truth" and "Reality" take on literal meanings – what is true is so independently of what I (or anyone) believes is actually the case, independently of what I (or anyone) experiences'. From the subjective point of view, these terms have a use, but one which is, from the objective standpoint, perverted. Subjectively, Truth means 'true for me'; objectively, it means, simply, 'true'. Thus, Kierkegaard's conception of subjective truth can only confuse these issues; objectively, Kierkegaard was not concerned with 'Truth' at all.
- For a very interesting discussion of Kierkegaard's ideas on truth, see Chapter 5 of the Oxford Past Masters on Kierkegaard by Patrick Gardiner, 1988. One might fare better with Heidegger's disclosure view (*aletheia*, ἀληθεια) as it is about the world, so not totally subjective.

See also *Faith and Reason* by S Mulhall, Chapter 2.

- 44 Putnam keeps changing his views, but the two works I consulted were *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (especially the final chapter), 1978, and *Reason, Truth and History*, 1981.
- 45 Review of Maudemarie Clark's 'Nietzsche on truth and philosophy' in *The European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 1 no. 1 by Dr Sebastian Gardner (Birkbeck College), 1993.
- 46 Nehamas in his essay, 'Nietzsche, Modernity, Aestheticism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Magnus and Higgins, 1996) comments: 'But if Nietzsche has no theory of truth it may now be asked, how can he possibly say that Christianity is a "lie" or that his own genealogical account is an instance of a "plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unChristian, immoral truth" (GM, I,i)? How can he consider anything as true or false? This question poses a real problem only for those who think that a term can be used correctly only if we have a general theory about its use and application. But this "Socratic" assumption is not justified. We do not need to be able to explain what feature makes all our true theories true in order to be able to claim that the theory of relativity is true partly because it explains the observations concerning the perihelion of Mercury better than its competitors, any more than we need to be able to give a general account of justice in order to know if returning a murderous weapon to its insane owner is just' (p. 240). But Clark for one would not be happy with this.



### CHAPTER 3

## Will to Power – Ontology or Myth?

*'I cannot see why it should be desirable that truth alone should rule and be omnipotent; it is enough for me that it should possess great power.'* (D. 507) Hollingdale version.

The previous chapter was concerned with the question: 'What is it for a belief to be true?', i.e. What is Truth? The present chapter focuses more on another question: 'What is it for a belief to be *held* true?'. It transpires that Nietzsche is much more concerned with this second question and less so with the first. He is highly critical of those philosophers who wish to reduce the subject matter of philosophy to epistemology (1).

Truth and illusion form a contrasted pair. Nietzsche says that what we take to be truths are necessary illusions. But doesn't that depend on a prior theory of truth? In view of the fact that Nietzsche's concern is with the role our illusory truth claims play in our lives, perhaps his position might be provisionally rendered coherent by saying that he offers us a *psychological* theory of illusion as part of a philosophical theory about truth.

As already indicated in the previous chapter, I find Professor D E Cooper's argumentation on these topics particularly misleading. He claims that what Nietzsche presents us with in the end are reconstructed theories of truth and knowledge (2). He cites as textual evidence the following passages from *The Will to Power* notes:

'The criterion of truth was in fact...biological utility: and since a species of animal knows nothing more important than to preserve itself, one may indeed speak of truth here' (WP 584).

and

'The criterion of truth lies in the increase of the feeling of power' (WP 534).

But surely what Nietzsche is engaged in here is something very different? He is not putting forward a theory of truth at all, reconstructed or otherwise, but giving an

explanation of why we hold things to be true (3). The emphasis is more on practice than on theory. Nietzsche does talk about biological utility, self-preservation and the like – so pragmatic considerations are brought into play. But using the words ‘truth’ and ‘pragmatic’ once again, but in a different context, is not conducive to clarity. We concluded in Chapter 2 that Nietzsche did not espouse a pragmatic theory of truth, but there is a danger here, if we are not careful, of slipping back into this belief. To avoid confusion, I shall henceforth use the term *Instrumental* (4) rather than ‘pragmatic’ in the present context. In the passages quoted by Professor David Cooper, Nietzsche is more preoccupied with the value various ‘truths’ have for us, and does not concern himself that much with the nature of truth. What gets highlighted is the power certain beliefs confer and not their truth, which would explain why we desire and value them. In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche raises the apposite question of what is the value of having value concepts at all? For Nietzsche, what is of value is the affirmation of life, as opposed to its denial, what enables us to obtain mastery and to grow. Self-affirmation gives a point to discovering truth. Value derives from life, not from something to which we are subordinated. Nietzsche wants to know: ‘Why do we always seek to deny?’. Values, as commonly understood, are inculcated values. Our actual values, we act on. It is the unconscious or driven values which are likely to cause problems. As Arthur Danto points out in his essay on the *Genealogy* (called ‘Some Remarks on the Genealogy of Morals’, in Solomon and Higgins, 1988, pp 21 ff), an enormous amount of suffering is caused by our urge to give things a meaning. We need a re-education of the will, according to Nietzsche. Christian morality, in particular, is attacked as life-denying. For resentment creates value in response to something else – it does not derive from one’s own self-sufficiency. It is an attitude of hostility to perceived power, rather than an exuberant and joyful exercising of one’s power such as one finds among the aristocracy. As Douglas Smith points out in the Introduction to his translation of the *Genealogy*: ‘For Nietzsche, the question of the value of truth is implicated in the questioning of moral values, since moral values characteristically seek to establish themselves as truth’. (For a recent treatment of Nietzsche on morals, see May’s *Nietzsche’s Ethics and his War on Morality*, 1999.)

Some indication of what Nietzsche is up to here is captured very well in the following excerpt from *The Gay Science* (Book V, section 347):

‘Believers and their need to believe – how much one needs a faith in order to flourish, how much that is ‘firm’ and that one does not wish to be shaken because one clings to it, that is a measure of the degree of one’s strength (or to put the point more clearly, of one’s weakness). Christianity, it seems to me, is still needed by most people in old Europe even today; therefore, it still finds believers. For this is how man is: an article of faith could be refuted before him a thousand times – if he needed it, he would consider it ‘true’ again and again in accordance with that famous proof of strength of which the Bible speaks.’

What Nietzsche is getting at in this passage is that different people derive a sense of power from different things, and this is because they evaluate life differently. A religious *Weltanschauung* confers power, but only on the weak and spiteful, whereas a materialist conception of the world will suffice for those more robust characters who do not require the comforts of an afterlife or divine justice (5).

Despite what some Nietzsche scholars argue, I shall maintain that the Will to Power concept is a significant and crucial notion in Nietzsche’s thought (6). But the expression ‘will to power’ is the name of nothing clear. Its very nature seems to preclude a more precise definition. Not surprisingly, the various commentators have ranged widely in their attempts to encapsulate it. Michael Tanner speaks of this central expression in terms of ‘...the fundamental reality of existence...the *Übermensch* manifests it in its purest, most impressive way: as self-overcoming...’ (7). Paul Thiele, too, agrees with this, for he writes: ‘Nietzsche’s glorification of the Will to Power, often interpreted as a eulogy of domination, is essentially a tribute to self-overcoming. The greatest struggles are not to be witnessed on the battlefield or in the sociopolitical arena, but in the rule of the self. The greatest victory is the well-ordered soul’ (8). Kaufmann (in Magnus and Higgins, *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 314) offers us a very similar reading. It was he who introduced the Will to Power as a non-political principle of personal, existential self-overcoming and self-transcendence. In the Preface to his well-known book (1974), p. xiv, he contends ‘that the Will to Power is the core of Nietzsche’s thought but inseparable

from his idea of sublimation'. Arthur Danto sees a close analogue between aggression and Will to Power, whilst Lea, in his essentially literary reading, takes Will to Power to be Nietzsche's definition of the deeper self (9). Several writers treat Will to Power as a metaphor. These include Schacht, Kaufmann, Hilary Lawson and, of course, David Allison in his introduction to *The New Nietzsche* collection. The last informs us that '...if Will to Power is the most comprehensive of all things without itself being a thing or substance or matter, or form, and if all things are expressions or appearances of Will to Power, then Nietzsche can only write about it metaphorically' (10).

Contrast this with the views of William Barrett who, in his well-known study of existentialism, links Will to Power to the essence of being. More recently, John Richardson, another American philosopher, has developed what he calls a *power ontology* in his book *Nietzsche's System* (11). He manages to give the Will to Power notion 'greater conceptual specificity' than previous readings, and acknowledges a special indebtedness to the writings of Martin Heidegger. This is essentially a conservative reading. A much more radical stance is adopted by Alexander Nehamas in his well-known book, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Nehamas, 1985, p. 96). As he interprets it: 'The picture of the world presupposed by the Will to Power, even when it is expressed in terms as positive as those of the statement "a thing is the sum of its effects", is not an alternative to the metaphysics of substance and accident. Nietzsche wants to show that our linguistic categories are compatible with different versions of the ontological structure of the world. That is, he wants to show that the world has no ontological structure'. This interpretation, of course, clashes head on with Richardson's thesis referred to just now (12).

What are we to make of this bewildering variety of readings? It behoves us to try and clarify, at least to some extent, what Nietzsche meant by this central neologized concept 'Will to Power'. This is not going to be easy, for as Magnus and Higgins point out in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (p. 42): 'Scholars disagree on whether the Will to Power should be viewed as a psychological observation or a metaphysical doctrine, and they have also disagreed on whether Nietzsche intended this primarily as an exploration of human behaviour or a more general cosmological account'. As far as the

present study is concerned, we have already decided upon our methodological strategy in Chapter 1. Priority will be given to the discussions of Will to Power found in the published works, and the later *Nachlass* will be used sparingly, if at all.

We have already seen that Nietzsche abjures metaphysics, but what is the Will to Power if not a hefty piece of theorizing about the nature of reality? Most interpreters these days tend to read the notion as a cosmological doctrine referring to the organic world, but are forced to draw on 'the bequest' to substantiate their claim. To avoid such reliance on the Notes, I prefer to adopt the line taken by Kaufmann and improved upon by Maudemarie Clark in her highly praised book on Nietzsche (13).

These American scholars argue that the Will to Power must be an empirical notion, otherwise it comes into conflict with Nietzsche's previous rejection of metaphysics. Another point in favour of this approach is that their reading fits the published works much better than do Schacht's or Nehamas's exegesis.

According to Kaufmann, when Nietzsche first talks about the Will to Power, it is in psychological terms. The Will to Power Nietzsche views as an essential part of the human persona. It has its origins in his many remarks about human motivation. The desire for power is a very important human motive. So, for Nietzsche, will is not some quasi-magical force or manifestation of a metaphysical reality. It is part of the natural man and the resultant of organic processes. The Will to Power in Nietzsche is a very personal, individual one. It is not the sort of general will we find in Schopenhauer. Clark agrees with Kaufmann here, for she says 'that, in calling our attention to this motive, Nietzsche does illuminate large areas of human life and behaviour' (Clark, 1990, p. 212).

We are much indebted to Kaufmann for tracing the history of the development of the Will to Power concept through Nietzsche's early writings, until it emerges in a mature form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (14). In his survey chapter, Kaufmann (1974) writes (p. 185): 'It is thus apparent that Nietzsche approached the conception of a will to power from two distinct points of view. First he thought of it as a craving for worldly success which he repudiated as harmful to man's interest in perfecting himself. Secondly, he thought of the will to power as a psychological drive in terms of which many diverse phenomena could be explained, e.g. gratitude, pity and self-abasement...'. Kaufmann

then shows that Nietzsche did indeed use 'power' to mean 'worldly power' in early works such as UM, but that this use was later abandoned. But Nietzsche continued to use the expression Will to Power as a principle to explain behaviour, as a psychological hypothesis.

Will to Power, then, is a psychological drive, and by 'drive' is meant here something like a disposition to behave in certain ways, though these may not necessarily be conscious. This psychological thesis forms the kernel of a view which Nietzsche then extends to cover the behaviours of all living creatures, and in the late works get generalised into 'the still more extreme hypothesis that the Will to Power is the basic force of the entire Universe' (Kaufmann, *ibid.*, p. 207).

Maudemarie Clark approves of Kaufmann's interpretation here, for it does not commit Nietzsche to a metaphysical thesis. The Will to Power is not to be extended to the entire cosmos. Such a mistaken reading is entirely due to an excessive reliance on the later bequest. Nietzsche did not believe that the world was Will to Power, although he did think of the concept as a psychological drive basic to human psychology. He also felt that we have a choice of *not* denying our drives, but of harnessing them within our control. Another problem here, is that it may not be that easy to draw a *clear* distinction between psychological and cosmological senses of the Will to Power. At any rate, Kaufmann, in his earlier encyclopaedia article (1967) rejects the cosmological version of the Will to Power as untrue. He even claims that it 'need not be taken seriously' (15).

Dr Clark praises the Kaufmann story about Will to Power because it seems to fit in better, preserving minimal standards of consistency. For example, asserting the full-blooded cosmological version of the Will to Power seems to clash with Nietzsche's perspectivism (in its mature reading) for it appears to deny him the right to claim that his Will to Power is anything but another arbitrary interpretation of the world. Richardson's reading of Nietzsche faces this problem in an acute form. My own preference is for the Kaufmann–Clark interpretation, as it does not violate Nietzsche's perspectivism or his summary dismissal of metaphysics. It also demarcates clearly the psychological from the cosmological versions of the Will to Power, and only assigns the former a central role. This reading finds confirmation in later works such as *On the Genealogy of Morals* where

the Will to Power plays a part similar to when it was first formulated. It seeks to explicate various human 'goings-on' in terms of a desire for power. Will to Power was an attempt to create a workable hypothesis for viewing man in a biological or psychological perspective.

Nevertheless, Maudemarie Clark is critical of Kaufmann's monistic view of Will to Power, whilst at the same time fortifying his empiricist reading of the doctrine. Her argument here is reminiscent of Freud's in that she opts for a dualistic account of the basic drives. She writes 'One may agree with Kaufmann...yet claim that the enlightening character of explanations of behaviour in terms of the desire for power is dependent on an implicit contrast with other motives and is therefore lost as soon as all other motives are interpreted as expressions of the Will to Power'.

She proceed to illustrate her argument here with a very good example which clinches it for me. Further support for Clark's view here is afforded by Mary Midgley, 1983, Chapter 9: 'The enlightening character of contemporary accounts of rape in terms of power, for example, seems dependent on the implied contrast between the desire for power and the desire for sex. What the rapist fundamentally wants is not sexual gratification but a sense of power. This explanation loses its enlightening character if one goes on to say that all behaviour is motivated by a desire for power, for then the motive for rape has not been differentiated from any other motive' (Clark, 1990, p. 210) (16).

Surely Clark is right to insist that Will to Power be defined so that some other type of motive can be contrasted with it. We may think of Will to Power empirically 'if we define "power" as the ability to do or get what one wants' (Clark, *ibid.*, p. 211). 'Will' might be viewed as the taking of an attitude to the status one finds oneself in. So it is the creation of a higher order amongst our lower desires. Clark sums up the situation as follows: 'The satisfaction of the Will to Power...has nothing essential to do with power over others but is a sense of one's effectiveness in the world...it amounts to thinking of the Will to Power as a second-order desire for the ability to satisfy one's other or first-order desires...' (Clark, 1990, p. 211).

The inter-relations of power over oneself and over others is a complex issue. Surely Nietzsche did not want to endorse mere power-mad conquests of self or others. He

would have agreed that *hubris* or false pride posed a danger to man. The ascetic represented the power-mad conquest of self, and Nietzsche, as we shall see later, was definitely opposed to this. He tried to provide a guide to the proper balance in his Zarathustra ideal: the egoistic self was to be overcome, yet one's self was not to be depressed but rather expressed with laughter.

John Richardson's discussion of Will to Power accords a more central role to power over others, in contrast to Clark's reading. He gives a very sophisticated discussion of this aspect of the doctrine on pp 28 – 35 of his recent book *Nietzsche's System* (1996). Richardson's thesis differs from Clark's in many respects, but there are also points of agreement. Professor Richardson does manage to clarify the Will to Power concept in that he describes it as 'a potency for something, a directedness towards some end'. On p. 20 he tells us that: 'To begin with, Will to Power is most basically applied not to people but to drives or forces, simple units which Nietzsche sometimes even calls points and power quanta'. (For more on this, see my Appendix to this chapter.) A few pages further on (p. 23) we learn that: 'Power has a different logic from ends like pleasure or political power. It can't be a highest end in the same way they are, because it is not a concrete or first-order end like them...power isn't an independent state that could be described without supposing some such effort as given. Pleasure, by contrast, is usually considered a concrete state, one that many activities can produce – as sex or eating does – but itself an experience distinct from these causes or means. Nietzschean power can't have this independence because it is (roughly) improvement in whatever a drive's activity already is; its growth or development in that pattern of effort, and therefore amounts to a different "concrete condition" for each different drive...Thus power as something willed by every drive "lacks content" requiring a contingent filling out from some given case. So, by this new *telic logic*, the routes to power don't converge on a common target. Willing their own development leads drives in diverging directions...' (p. 24).

I cite this passage at some length because it affords confirmation that the Clark reading which I subscribe to is on target. Richardson provisionally concludes that 'power is growth in level of activity or in strength' (p. 28, *ibid.*). But we have to be careful here.



An increase in power does not necessarily lead to an increase in strength. On the contrary, it often makes one more susceptible to harm or injury (see Nehamas, 1985, p. 92).

However, Clark, whilst not denying that the claim that all behaviour is motivated by the desire for power *might be true*, feels that taking this as an empirical hypothesis is unhelpful and vacuous. Perhaps Nietzsche emphasized power so much because he felt it was neglected at that time just like Freud overemphasized sex to correct an imbalance in his era. Kaufmann also makes comment on this issue in the earlier Encyclopaedia article. He claims that: 'In some cases an appeal to the Will to Power is far fetched and not very illuminating. Nietzsche never gave systematic attention either to apparently negative instances or to possible alternative hypotheses...' (1967) (17). Also, Clark intends to demonstrate that Nietzsche offers nothing in the way of support for an all-encompassing cosmological Will to Power, in the published works at any rate.

This seminal concept of the Will to Power gets its first outing in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in a chapter in Part One called 'Of the thousand and one goals', which tells how the prophet Zarathustra visited many lands and found that people *evaluate* differently from their neighbours:

'A table of values hangs over every people. Behold it is the table of its overcoming; behold it is the voice of its Will to Power. What it accounts hard it calls praiseworthy; what it accounts indispensable and hard it calls good; and that which relieves the greatest need, the rare, the hardest of all – it glorifies as holy.' (p. 84, Hollingdale trans.)

The Will to Power is introduced here to explain why a people evaluates as it does. What people value is what gives them the greatest sense of effectiveness. If, as Clark and others argue, power is a second-order desire, then it depends on our perceived need, our first-order desires. 'If there is no perceived need or desire for something, the ability to do or get it will not give a sense of power and therefore according to Zarathustra's account it will not be esteemed' (Clark, 1990, p. 229).

Another factor Zarathustra mentions is what a people find difficult. If something comes easy, the ability to do it will not give much sense of power either. There is another brief discussion of the Will to Power in a chapter in Part 2 of this same work which has

the title *Of Self Overcoming*. Here Zarathustra says, 'He who shot the doctrine of "Will to Existence" at truth certainly did not hit the truth; this will does not exist...'. This is obviously an attack on Schopenhauer. Then he continues: 'Only where life is, there is also will; not will to life, but so I teach you – will to power!'

The human being values many things higher than life itself; still, out of this evaluation speaks once again the Will to Power. Self-overcoming also gets linked to the Will to Power in that a people's values reflect the Will to Power of the wisest: 'That is your entire will, you wisest men; it is a will to power; and that is so even when you talk of good and evil and of the assessment of values'. That is more or less all that Nietzsche has to say on the subject in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

*Beyond Good and Evil* was the next book to be published after *Zarathustra* and it is in this work that Nietzsche gives us an extended discussion of Will to Power. Maudemarie Clark draws our attention to the fact that '...its first two parts contain four relatively detailed sections that provide a more sustained reflection on the doctrine than we find in any of Nietzsche's other books (BGE 9, 22, 23, 36). It also discusses the Will to Power by name in at least seven other sections (BGE 13, 44, 51, 186, 211, 227, 259). The Will to Power is mentioned much less frequently in Nietzsche's later books and it never again receives sustained discussion...' (Clark, p. 212, *ibid.*).

For someone concerned, as I am, to defend the Clark–Kaufmann reading of Will to Power, section 36 of BGE immediately poses a problem, as it seems to confirm the cosmological reading of Will to Power adopted by most commentators. I quoted Schopenhauer's definition of metaphysics in the previous chapter. If Nietzsche accepted this definition, which seems likely, then his proclamations regarding Will to Power need to be explicated as non-metaphysical. He clearly felt that it did not fall under this definition. A more careful reading of Nietzsche's text is required at this point (18):

'...that is to say to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and after with reservations, with doors open, with delicate eyes and fingers' (D, Preface).

If we look at BGE 36 in that light, we find the argument is put forward as a sort of thought experiment – 'What if?' or, in the Hollingdale translation, 'Granted that'; nothing is given as real except our world of desires and passions, that we cannot rise or

sink to no other 'reality' than the reality of our drives. Nietzsche adds more detail to the supposed argument before finally concluding:

'The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its "intelligible character" – it would be will to power and nothing else.'

But all we have to do here is question the premises in order to call the whole argument into question. The opening remarks stress the reality of the drives which is fine, but what about that other reality, our knowledge and experience of the external world? It is also legitimate to ask why one might prioritize the inner over the outer. According to Clark (1990), p. 214: '...the first premise would openly conflict with Nietzsche's denial in BGE 16 that there are any "immediate certainties" including "I think" or "I will" '. A second strand to the argument occurs later on in this section where Nietzsche states that:

'In the end, the question is whether we really recognize will as efficient, whether we believe in the causality of will: if we do so – then we have to make the experiment of positing causality of will hypothetically as the only one.'

But again, this comes into conflict with what Nietzsche argues elsewhere. He normally does not believe in the causality of the will (19). Let me cite just one representative passage to substantiate my point. In the *Anti-Christ* he writes:

'Formerly, man was presented with free will as a dowry from a higher order; today we have taken even will away from him, in the sense that will may no longer be understood as a faculty. The word "will" only serves to designate a resultant' (A 14).

But why does Nietzsche deny the existence of will? Elsewhere in BGE 19 he replies: 'Willing seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only as a word'. It encompasses, he continues, at least sensation, thought and the affect of command. But, because we use just the one term for this complex and it occurs in the majority of cases only when the action is anticipated we delude ourselves into believing that 'willing suffices for action' (p. 49).

Then again, Nietzsche 'does not deny that something within us has causal power'. But this tends to be unconscious, as indicated at BGE 3. Therefore, one can't help agreeing with Alexander Nehamas when he concludes '[that] if Nietzsche does not believe

that the psychological notion of the will applies even to humans' behaviour, then it may be that the will to power does not, after all, attribute as it so paradoxically appears to do, consciousness and intention to the whole universe' (1985), p. 76.

Given all this, we cannot reasonably attribute to Nietzsche the argument contained in BGE 36. But, this is the only extended argument for the cosmological doctrine of Will to Power to be had in the published writings. That leaves the possibility already canvassed that it is, in fact, a psychological notion. That the knowledge which Nietzsche ascribes to Will to Power is psychological and not cosmological is reinforced in BGE 23 where he stresses that:

'All psychology has hitherto remained anchored to moral prejudices and timidities: it has not ventured into the depths. To conceive it as morphology and the development-theory of the Will to Power, as I conceive it – has never yet so much as entered the mind of anyone else:...A genuine physio-psychology has to struggle with unconscious resistances in the heart of the investigator, it has the heart against it...' (Hollingdale trans.)

Maudemarie Clark, in her excellent discussion of BGE 36, considers why Nietzsche presents us with an argument for the cosmological Will to Power which he clearly does not accept himself. Why does Nietzsche deliberately mislead us? Presumably to make us think out the conundrum for ourselves. After all, does he not concede in section 27 of the same work (BGE): 'I am certainly doing everything I can to be hard to understand myself! – and one ought to be heartily grateful even for the will to some subtlety in interpretation' (Hollingdale trans., pp 58 – 59).

This subtlety is certainly in evidence in the two other major sections of BGE, where Will to Power gets discussed. In section 9 he takes the Stoics to task for their 'sleight of argument'. They afford him a particularly good example of the dishonesty and skulduggery which he finds all too common in the writings of philosophers. He ridicules their notion of living 'according to nature'.

'You want to live "according to nature"? O you noble Stoics, what fraudulent words! Think of a being such as nature is, prodigal beyond measure...without aims or intentions...To live – is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature?'

In the fourth UM, Nietzsche says that passion is better than Stoicism and hypocrisy. He now proceeds to taunt these philosophers for perpetrating such a ruse and for oversimplifying:

‘...while you rapturously pose as deriving the canon of your law from nature, you want something quite the reverse... Your pride wants to prescribe your morality, your ideal to nature, yes to nature itself, and incorporate them in it, you demand that nature should be nature according to the Stoa and would like to make all existence exist only after your own image – as a tremendous eternal glorification and universalization of Stoicism!’

What Nietzsche is indicating here is that there is always a hidden agenda in such philosophies which tends to get masked. Nietzsche locates the greater part of the philosopher’s activity at the level of instincts. The more conscious thoughts of such writers are dictated by their desires, ‘valuations or more clearly physiological demands for the preservation of a certain kind of life’ (BGE 3). As Heller expresses it in *The Importance of Nietzsche* (p. 63), philosophical creations were ‘dams built against the rush on emptiness, of the “nihil”, the spiritual vacuity created by the “death of God”’. The psychological necessity of philosophizing (creating) consists in an escape from reality, from oneself? Plato, for one, chose this avenue of escape. So, such theories, then, are not even designed to get near the truth. They simply tailor nature to suit their own purposes, and they tend to down play the nasty and cruel side of nature. What about its wastefulness, for instance? But, according to Nietzsche:

‘...this is an old and never-ending story: what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today as soon as a philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual Will to Power, to creation of the world...’  
(Hollingdale trans., p. 39)

But Maudemarie Clark, in a masterstroke, enquires if this line of argument is also meant to be applied to Nietzsche’s own philosophy, and especially the argument in BGE 36 (Clark, 1990, p. 221). She writes that: ‘If he is consistent about this, he must admit that his

cosmological doctrine of the Will to Power is an attempt to read his values into the world and that he does not consider it to be true...’

Nietzsche, then, is only a metaphysician in a rhetorical sense. He is saying, ‘Here is my own metaphysics based on my need’, but not claiming any absolute validity for it. It is more like a form of artistic invention, even a continuation of the mythic drive found in the pre-Platonic philosophies (20). When he states that nature is Will to Power, he is being ironic. Philosophical theories of the world are never just manifestations of the Will to Truth and always essentially projections of the Will to Power, myths about the world constructed for the express purpose of conveying values and intended to further the Will to Power ‘by appropriating the world through thought’. Clark actually describes Will to Power as a self-conscious myth in an earlier 1983 paper. (See Nehamas, 1985, p. 243 on this.)

BGE 22 is best known for what it says about the relationship between interpretation and the Will to Power. Nietzsche writes:

‘You must pardon me as an old philologist who cannot refrain from the maliciousness of putting his finger on bad arts of interpretation; but “nature’s conformity to law” of which you physicists speak so proudly as though it exists only thanks to your interpretation and bad philology – it is not a fact, not a text...’

Having characterized the physicists’ account of the world as only interpretation and not text, and sketched his alternative vision of this world as Will to Power, Nietzsche concludes: ‘Granted this too is only interpretation – and you will be eager enough to raise this objection? Well, so much the better’.

Dr Clark offers a deft analysis of this well-known section, noted for its ‘supposed’ admission that the doctrine of Will to Power is only interpretation. How one reads ‘interpretation’ here is obviously crucial (21). For Clark, Nietzsche is not saying that knowledge and therefore physics too is always subject to revision, and he shows this by not including physics as interpretation. In Leiter’s discussion of the passage he distinguishes carefully between *interpretation* and *mere interpretation*. Both writers want to challenge the latter but retain the former. For Clark, the reading we give of the

mathematical formulas referred to in section 22 depends on our values – democratic ones in this instance. But this does not deny that physics provides us with true knowledge.

‘Not physics itself, that is, physical theories but the metaphors in terms of which we interpret them read moral values into nature.’

But we could read the same nature as Will to Power (in its cosmological version) by interpreting into the same text provided by physics values antithetical to democracy (Clark, 1990, p. 222).

But how might Clark’s reading cope with the suggestion made by Danto and others that Will to Power is also only interpretation? She responds by saying that Nietzsche puts it on a par *not* with physics, but with a belief in nature’s ‘conformity to law’ which owes its existence to bad philology and democratic values. She understands his ‘so much the better’ as an admission that his doctrine of the Will to Power does read his values into nature, so he does not regard it as any truer than the idea that nature conforms to law (Clark, 1990, p. 223). This enables Nietzsche to remain consistent and does not conflict with what he has already stated about philosophy above. As Professor Leiter (1994) wisely remarks in his paper (p. 342): ‘...good philology just involves interpretation that does not falsify the matters at issue. In none of this is there a suggestion that, because knowledge requires interpretation, the justification of the conclusions of good “philology” is undermined’.

Such an explication of the cosmological version of the Will to Power seems to be perfectly thought out and finds ample confirmation in Nietzsche’s texts. In some of the adjacent sections in BGE, the Will to Power is presented as having value implications (see BGE 259 for example). We find similar remarks elsewhere. In the Preface to *Daybreak* (p. 3) we find the following:

‘...The correct answer would rather have been that all philosophers were building under the seduction of morality, even Kant – that they were apparently aiming at certainty, at truth but in reality at *Majestic Moral Structures!*...’

Even in the early *Nachlass*, Nietzsche was already thinking along these lines. According to Irena Makarushka (1994, pp 82 – 83) in one of these early fragments (23): ‘Nietzsche expressed reservations with regard to the knowledge drive which in his later works he

referred to as the Will to Truth. He contrasted the philosopher of desperate knowledge [who] will be absorbed in blind science, knowledge at any price, with the tragic philosopher who, aware of the negativity of existence, recognizes the necessity and value of illusions, of creating concepts to be appropriated in the service of life. The tragic philosopher is not merely a skeptic, who rejects metaphysics; rather he judges metaphysics to be anthropomorphic – an illusion created to complete the picture of existence...’.

Such ideas are further elaborated upon by Nietzsche in some of the later published works (see, for example, Book V of *The Gay Science*, section 344), so they form a sort of permanent fixture in his thought.

A final piece of evidence which affirms our reading is section 44 of BGE where Nietzsche distinguishes between a ‘life-will’ and a ‘power will’. He writes:

‘We who are the opposite of this, and have opened our eyes and our conscience to the question where and how the plant “Man” has hitherto grown up most vigorously we think that this has always happened under the opposite conditions, that the perilousness of his situation had first to become tremendous, his powers of invention and dissimulation (his spirit) had under protracted pressure and constraint to evolve into subtlety and daring, his will to life had to be intensified into unconditional will to power’ (Hollingdale trans., p. 72).

Isn’t this an admission that life itself is not Will to Power because it claims that a Will to Power does not automatically come with life but must be developed by embracing one’s life will? However, Tanner stresses the close affinity between the two concepts rather than their difference (see his *Nietzsche*, 1994, p. 65). I conclude, therefore, that, although Nietzsche does not believe the doctrine of Will to Power in its application to nature, he still accords it a central role – for every enhancement of the human type depends on a strengthening of the Will to Power (24).

Nietzsche’s apparent tendency to make a cosmic world principle of the Will to Power is the main difference between his and Alfred Adler’s more firmly psychological conception of power. In the craving for power, the latter identified compensation for an



inferiority complex. Its positive goal was the integration of this need for esteem within the human community via therapeutic means (25).

Thus far, the spotlight has been on the cosmological aspect of the Will to Power. I tend to agree with Clark that Nietzsche does not take this to be veridical. Rather, he puts it forward as his own preferred hypothesized image of the world. It is his *vision* of how he would like the world to be (see Appendix One below for more on this alternative vision). Nietzsche regarded all the major metaphysical systems of the past (Plato, Aristotle, Kant, etc.) as projections of the philosophers' own inclinations which they were either unaware of or did not acknowledge. That is why they put them forward as 'the truth'. But Nietzsche himself realized that he was not putting forward a truth claim in the style of the Metaphysicians of old. It had more to do with motivation in that he was just projecting his life-affirming ideal, i.e. the Will to Power, and not claiming real knowledge. In other words, it is a construction of the world from the standpoint of his moral values. Following Clark's lead, I propose to call this the *external sense* of the Will to Power.

But then, again, it would be grossly misleading to interpret everything Nietzsche says about power in this way. He obviously claims all sorts of knowledge of the human desire for power and this is the other side of the coin. Surely the notion of the various drives striving after power is put forward as an empirical hypothesis and therefore a candidate for truth. It may, of course, turn out to be false. But the doctrine has got to be true if it is to have any explanatory force, and Nietzsche does utilize it to explain the Will to Knowledge. In many passages which speak of the Will to Power, reference is often made to physiology and psychology. Take the brief section 13 in BGE, Part I:

'Physiologists should think again before postulating the drive to self-preservation as the cardinal drive in an organic being. A living thing desires, above all, to vent its strength – life as such is Will to Power...'

Psychology now becomes Nietzsche's chief combat weapon. I have already quoted from section 23 at the end of Part I (BGE). Notice how Nietzsche draws this section to a close:

'...psychology shall again be recognized as the queen of the sciences, to serve and prepare for which the other sciences exist. For psychology is now once again the road to the fundamental problems' (BGE, Penguin edition, p. 54). (26)

And does not Nietzsche say in *Ecce Homo* (Hollingdale trans., p. 75):

‘That out of my writings there speaks a psychologist who has not his equal, that is perhaps the first thing a good reader will notice – a reader such as I deserve...’

As we have already seen, what Nietzsche does claim knowledge about is the Will to Power as a sort of second-order drive which he recognizes as dependent for its existence on other, more basic drives. If we refuse to credit the existence of this more psychological concept of Will to Power as true, it’s going to be difficult, if not impossible, to render Nietzsche’s views coherent. Clark (1990) is reassuring when she writes: ‘His psychology of the Will to Power does not depend on denying the relevance of sense testimony, or on the assumption of a thing in itself and is therefore not a metaphysical doctrine or a violation of his perspectivism’ (p. 228). Taking on board this idea that Nietzsche is especially concerned with a more psychological sense of Will to Power, this forms a contrast with the externalized Will to Power already distinguished above. Will to Power can be directed outwardly or inwardly. Inwardly, it becomes cruelty towards the self or the instincts. Nietzsche is not against this turning inwards of cruelty, but he rejects the idea that the values this produces come from anything higher (Plato’s higher world, Christianity, etc.). Self-sacrifice is pleasurable because power must be exercised against something *which resists*. Overcoming of resistance, self-overcoming, produces pleasure. This will be utilized to explain the Will to Truth, as we shall see shortly. Maudemarie Clark calls this more inward Will to Power an *internalized spiritualized* Will to Power. It will prove central to the arguments which follow in the remainder of this Chapter.

Two major issues need addressing at this point: (1) What is the relationship between this psychological Will to Power and the Will to Truth?; and (2) How is the Will to Power connected with the psychology of Asceticism?

Let’s tackle the latter issue first, as we have already discussed the Will to Power as the drive responsible for philosophy in BGE 9. Asceticism Nietzsche views as an internalization of the Will to Power, and he claims that the Ascetic is very like the philosopher in that he is a very powerful person. The main discussion of the ascetic ideal is to be found in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. This ideal of self-denial and self-abnegation has been the dominant one, but Nietzsche plans to replace it with the

affirmation of life. He views his predecessor Schopenhauer as a typical ascetic for he turns away from earthly desires and claims to need asceticism to get through life. By ascetic ideals, Nietzsche apparently means any ideal that requires one to frustrate the basic need of the human organism, such as the desire to feel good about oneself and the existence of the sex instinct.

Even the strongest of men, Nietzsche tells us (BGE 51) have always been fascinated by the Saint (another ascetic type) because they discerned in him a power which was engaged in an 'autostruggle' and involved considerable self-discipline.

'They honoured something in themselves when they honoured the saint. In addition to this the sight of the saint aroused a suspicion in them: such an enormity of denial, of anti-nature, will not have been desired for nothing, they said to themselves' (Penguin trans., p. 79).

The self-inflicted suffering of the Saint is but a mark of his Will to Power, even though he turns this Will against his own impulses.

Nietzsche, of course, viewed the clergy as the real experts as far as the internalization of the Will to Power was concerned. It was internal rather than external barriers that kept them from directing their Will to Power outwards:

'There is from the outset something unhealthy in such priestly aristocracies and in the customs which prevail among them, customs which are turned away from action and combine brooding with emotional volatility' (GM, essay I, section 6).

The priests' inability to give external expression to their Will to Power only makes it stronger still. They afford another striking example of the ascetic type. Their main function is to redirect the hostility the weak feel back on themselves, and so protect the strong from any acts of revenge. The priest persuades the slaves that they are responsible for their own suffering and convinces them to take refuge under asceticism (Nietzsche himself assumes that the primary causes are physiological). The ultimate goal of the ascetic ideal is to justify their suffering to the weak and to promote a sense of life's value. The priest makes such people feel that they matter, and that they can do something worthwhile. This is made very clear in the following passage:

‘...in prescribing “love of one’s neighbour”, the ascetic priest is basically prescribing, albeit in the most careful doses, a stimulus for the strongest, most life-affirming drive – the Will to Power. The happiness of “minimal superiority” which all good deed, making oneself useful, helping and rewarding bring with them, is the means of consolation which the physiologically inhibited are most accustomed to using and is indeed the most effective, as long as they are well advised: otherwise they hurt each other in obedience to the same fundamental instinct, of course’ (GM, essay III, section 18, Smith trans.).

*The ascetic ideal is put forward as a paradox, for it appears to involve a lively passion for what is contrary to life.* Nietzsche claims that asceticism actually affirms life, even though its basic message is that ‘life is an empty suitcase’. In the closing lines of the third Essay of the *Genealogy* he describes the ascetic ideal as ‘a Will to Nothingness’ and he then concludes: ‘Man would rather will nothingness than not will at all.’ (GM, Smith trans., p. 136). The will involved here is, of course, the Will to Power. The paradox is resolved, hopefully, by Nietzsche’s own explication of asceticism. We discover in GM III 8 that poverty, humility and chastity are paradigmatic of ascetic ideals, as far as Nietzsche is concerned.

Maudemarie Clark asks a very apposite question at this juncture. Why is the ascetic ideal necessary? Why can’t ascetics just internalize their Will to Power without having to be life-deniers as well? The issue seems to be that the ascetic who believed he participated in ascetic practices just to obtain ‘a sense of power would no longer be able to get a sense of power from it’ (Clark, 1990, p. 233). As already stated above, Will to Power is a second-order drive; being able to do something furnishes a sense of power only if there is some independent reason for pursuing it. ‘Thus, ascetics needed a way of interpreting their activity of self-denial that gave it value, quite apart from any sense of power they got from it, which is what the ascetic ideal provided’ (Clark, 1990, p. 234). But in section 27 of the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*, in what Michael Tanner describes as a stupendous passage, Nietzsche predicts that the Will to Truth will overcome the ascetic ideal. The noblest philosophers will ask: ‘Why do we want truth at any price?’.

‘All great things are the cause of their own destruction, through an act of self-cancellation: the law of life, the law of necessary “self-overcoming” which is the essence of life, wills it so – ultimately, the call goes out to the legislator himself, “*patere legem, quam ipse utilisti*”. In this way, Christianity as dogma was destroyed by its own morality; in this way, Christianity as morality must now be destroyed – we are standing on the threshold of this very event’ (GM, Smith trans., p. 135).

When the Will to Truth discovers the truth about itself, the ascetic ideal is doomed. The artifice will no longer work, for the Will to Truth exposes it for what it is. Clark captures very well the conflict involved here in the following sentence: ‘...rather than giving mastery over life, asceticism amounts to being outsmarted or mastered by life...’ (Clark, 1990, p. 234). This clarifies why Nietzsche considers psychology to be central to his analysis. The difficulty faced here is truly a psychological one. Once we realize that ascetic ideals are sickly and opposed to vitality, we will have to start looking around for a more appropriate, life-enhancing ideal. We require some sort of surrogate for ascetic /metaphysical beliefs. For these depend on opposite values, as Nietzsche points out in a famous passage in BGE, Part I, section 2. But Nietzsche firmly rejects the metaphysical/ascetic understanding of knowledge and truth, and seeks a more naturalistic alternative instead.

There seems to be considerable disagreement among secondary commentators about Nietzsche’s own attitude to the ascetic ideal. He must surely have been aware that he himself had been driven by the Will to Truth, and that as a thinker he had taken a quasi-ascetic life-style as a means to achieve his own strengths (27). In section 24 of the Third Essay of GM, Nietzsche poses the question: do we still need the ascetic ideal? If one thinks that man is dependent on some outside source, the answer is: YES.

Professor Thiele, in his book, offers a sort of compromise solution on asceticism. He argues that what Nietzsche is attacking is just decadent forms of the ideal (Thiele, 1990, p. 148). Kaufmann, on the other hand, defends Nietzsche as a proponent of the ascetic ideal despite the fact that the Third Essay of the *Genealogy* leaves no doubt but that he opposed it. Kaufmann seems to think that Nietzsche rejects the priestly version of the

ascetic ideal and accepts the philosopher's version. but, as we have related above, Clark convincingly argues that the ideal philosopher is more under the influence of the Will to Power than the notion of self-denial. Anti-life ideals really just demonstrate the actuality of Will to Power in all life.

It is now time to consider the first question set aside above, namely: What is the relationship between the Will to Power in its psychological sense and the Will to Truth? The first thing we have to take cognisance of is that the Will to Truth is nothing but the latest expression of the ascetic ideal. Science is the latest and noblest form of this. It, too, expresses Will to Power. Kaufmann for one has problems with this interlinkage of concepts. He issues a *caveat* against making too close a link between Will to Truth and Will to Power. 'By including truth within the confines of this theory of the Will to Power, he [Nietzsche] has perhaps called in a Trojan Horse that threatens his entire philosophy with ruin' (1974, p. 203).

But it is precisely at this point that Kaufmann's influential interpretation begins to show its age. He offers us a portrait of Nietzsche as a traditional philosopher in the mould of Socrates and Hegel. Nietzsche is represented as a defender of truth in the standard sense, and the ascetic ideal is retained. But Nietzsche castigates Socrates for supplanting action by argument. He himself appeals more to the person and the emotions. Nietzsche would also be opposed to the sort of all-pervading rationalism we find in Hegel. It handicaps the Will. (For a good *exposé* of Kaufmann's reading, see Parkes, 1994, pp 450 – 452.) Once more, Clark's explication seems closer to Nietzsche's intent here, and constitutes a sort of answer to Kaufmann's Trojan Horse point. A key section is number 230 in BGE where, according to Nietzsche knowledge is first directed by a need for a sense of power in relation to the external world. He expresses his thoughts as follows:

'That commanding something which the people calls "spirit" wants to be master within itself and around itself and to feel itself master: out of multiplicity it has the will to simplicity, a will which binds together and tames, which is imperious and domineering' (BGE 230, Penguin edition, p. 160).

I agree with Clark that this seems to overlook a more basic stage in the knowing process which is dictated by more practical concerns like the need to light a fire or kill an

animal for food. The quotation above is already too theoretical. The original intention in such knowing is surely:

‘...to appropriate what is foreign to it [there is] a strong inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the complex, to overlook or repel what is wholly contradictory’ (BGE 230 again).

What we have here is knowledge at the service of Man – what’s good for me to know and helps in my life. Growth is being pursued and an increased feeling of power. What such a seeker after knowledge demands is not truth ‘but the feeling of intellectual appropriation in relation to the world. The so-called commitment to truth at any price seems to be a much later development’. At this earlier stage the discoverer of theoretical truths was satisfied with mere simplification or even falsification. In the selfsame section of BGE, section 230, Nietzsche explains how a Will to Knowledge or Truth, in contrast to a Will to intellectual appropriation, demands ‘the internalization of the Will to Power, the ability to derive a sense of power out of denying oneself the satisfaction of interpretations one would like to be true because of what one actually has reason to believe’ (Clark, 1990, p. 237). And how, one may ask, did this come about? The answer given in the present work and in GM is that is developed out of the philosopher’s commitment to the ascetic ideal. For, like the Saint, the philosopher’s desire for a sense of power turns against his self, forcing it to forego the satisfaction of his instincts. But it is also denying the external world, devaluing it. But the ascetic ideal eventually pushes the spirit so far that the Will to intellectual appropriation turns into a Will to Truth. So our actual Will to Truth has its heir in a ‘pretended Will to Truth’. Clark clarifies this complex reading of the relationship between power and truth by reminding us once again that ‘philosophy involves two different orientations expressive of the Will to Power. She quotes *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 12 as evidence for this. First there is the desire for intellectual appropriation of the world, a wish to make the world fit into our categories. This later becomes the Will to Truth. Secondly, there is the desire ‘to create a world before which one can kneel’, that is, to construct a picture of the world which reflects the philosopher’s values. It is crucial to realize (see BGE 5) that this second sense comes first and the first sense is derivative from this (28).

Unlike Kaufmann, Maudemarie Clark seems to have the measure of Nietzsche's argument here. Her reading allows him to concede that his own Will to Truth is an expression of the Will to Power, but this does *not* lead him into a position of incoherence or paradox. For, to maintain that the Will to Truth is but an aspect of the Will to Power is not to deny that it is still a Will to Truth or that it accomplishes truth. This Will to Truth expresses a spiritualized Will to Power. And yet, this is quite different from the case of the cosmological Will to Power (external) with which Nietzsche first identifies philosophy (one need only recall BGE 9). Here the will is not constrained by considerations of truth but constructs the world to fit its own will, though of course it pretends to be dealing with truth.

Nietzsche then goes on to suggest not only that the Will to Truth can co-exist with the philosopher's Will to impose values on the world, but that the former may actually require the latter. Contemporary philosophers cannot just confine themselves to the truths which science discovers. They need to be able to put their stamp on the world, to create values. Up until now, they have done this via the ascetic avenue and by denigrating the empirical world. But the ascetic ideal in all its variants is revealed as self-deceptive, a failure in self-knowledge. A new ideal is required to replace this negative one, and Will to Power seems to fit the bill. I agree with Clark's ultimate conclusion that Nietzsche himself brings to the aid of his Will to Truth, his doctrine of life as Will to Power. This forms his alternative to the protean ascetic ideal. *But what about the Overman* and the doctrine of The Eternal Recurrence of the Same? See my response in Note 29 below.

The focus of this chapter has been on the value which truth has for us. This necessitated a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's views on Will to Power. So, there has been a shift away from philosophy in the accepted sense, to psychology. We found that, for Nietzsche, Will to Power has priority over truth, and the latter concept derives from the former. Will to Power as myth gives rise to visions of reality which are put forward as untrue, but there is also developed a more naturalistic or psychological sense of Will to Power which is grounded in fact and possessed of explanatory force.

I shall leave the final word on this difficult area to John Richardson whose fine book *Nietzsche's System* (1996) represents a major contribution to Nietzsche studies. On p. 32



I find the following passage which gives me hope that the line I have taken on Will to Power in the body of the text is not entirely mistaken. He writes: 'But we can at least notice certain raw evidence that Nietzsche rejects a subjectivist notion of power. First it seems he can't think a will's power is in the eye of "the will itself" because he holds that wills can be wrong as to whether they grow. Growing doesn't just lie in my thinking I do; that can often be wishful thinking, a mistake about my real status. Second, it seems he can't think a will's power depends on other wills' views of it because he so clearly denies that power is a matter of reputation or recognition. Instead will to power aims at a real condition, specified independently of any perspectives ABOUT POWER. This insistence on the prevalence of error about power makes Nietzsche far more a realist than an idealist about it: a drive's enhancing its activity or strength is a real change in its activity or in its real relation to other drives'.

### Notes to Chapter 3 – Will to Power – Ontology or Myth?

- 1 See, for example BGE, section 204 and section 6. It is also worth consulting *Reading Nietzsche*, eds Solomons and Higgins, p. 162.
- 2 These views are put forward in Professor D Cooper's 1983 volume on Nietzsche's educational philosophy, entitled *Authenticity and Learning*. I refer especially to Chapter 5, pp 77 – 83.
- 3 I draw the reader's attention to an important footnote in Daniel Breazeale's introduction to some of Nietzsche's early notebooks, entitled *Philosophy and Truth* (1990). On page xxvii he writes: 'that Nietzsche's proposals for interpreting truths in terms of their value for human life are almost invariably accompanied with some remarks concerning the "illusory" or fictional character of such truths. These remarks are incomprehensible to those who fail to recognize Nietzsche's own deep and abiding commitment to the correspondence ideal which he criticized so mercilessly'.
- 4 This term 'instrumental' I have also borrowed from Breazeale. On page xxviii of the same introduction he writes: 'Truths are humanly constructed instruments designed to serve human purposes.'

- 5 Religion is, for Nietzsche, one of the greatest, if also one of the most objectionable manifestations of the Will to Power. His discussion of how new religions are established shows how crucially important he takes interpretation to be. See Nehamas (1985) p. 97 and GM 2, section 12. In this section of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes: ‘...that anything which exists once it has somehow come into being, can be reinterpreted in the service of new intentions, repossessed, repeatedly modified to a new use by a power superior to it...’ (D Smith trans., p. 57). According to Stanley Rosen (*The Limits of Analysis*, 1985, p. 198): ‘Nietzsche is no Christian but one might perhaps call him “god intoxicated” in view of his regular association of the Will to Power with Dionysus’. Thiele (1990) is also good on religion. See, for example, p. 144 of his book and, of course, there is the recent essay by Jorg Salaquarda in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Finally, there is Irena Makarushka’s (1994) book on the elective affinity between Emerson and Nietzsche. She has chapters on both thinkers’ views about religion.
- 6 But on this, see Julian Young’s *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Art*, 1992, pp 1 – 2.
- 7 Michael Tanner’s *Nietzsche* in the Oxford Past Masters Series is a useful introductory survey of Nietzsche’s writings as a whole. My reference is to p. 48.
- 8 Professor Thiele’s book is called *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul – a Study of Heroic Individualism*, 1990. See p. 65 for the source of my citation. This monograph presents us with Nietzsche as a great thinker and his effort to lead a heroic life as a philosopher. Thiele’s starting point is Nietzsche’s conception of the soul as a multiplicity of conflicting drives and personae and the struggle to become what one is. Thiele describes the journey Nietzsche took as a sort of spiritual politics. He also uses Jungian concepts to explicate Nietzsche, for example the concept of individuation which is the goal of Jungian psychology overall. Speaking of Jung, there are two other works which are well worth consulting on the more psychological aspects of Nietzsche’s life and work. Dr Frey Rohn, another follower of Jung, has written a brilliant analysis of Nietzsche’s own psychology. Her book (1989) has been translated from the German as *Friedrich Nietzsche – a Psychological Approach to his Life and Work*. The second volume is of more recent

vintage, and gives us a very sophisticated and insightful reading of Nietzsche as psychologist. The work has a very apt title. It is called *Composing the Soul* and the author is Graham Parkes (1994). It relates 'the contours' of Nietzsche's psychology to the context of Nietzsche's life and psychological make-up. Once again, this interpretation draws heavily on Jungian themes. Parkes himself acknowledges the influence of James Hillman who is a leading post-Jungian and an exponent of archetypal psychology.

My own view is that there is a much closer link between Nietzsche and Jung than there is between Nietzsche and Freud. Jung actually conducted a seminar on Zarathustra which went on for a number of years. This was published in two volumes edited by James Jarrett (1988) as *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*. The motifs of the hero, the fool, the wise old man, the child, the shadow are collective patterns found in almost every mythology. Nietzsche utilized these concepts in a philosophical context and Jung spoke of them as archetypes of the collective unconscious.

References to Nietzsche are scattered throughout Jung's writings (cf. *Collected Works* trans. by R F C Hull, Princeton University Press, 1968 onwards). This Nietzsche–Jung interface is well worth exploring. Jung always claimed he was an empiricist and he was much influenced by Nietzsche in his account of dreams. Hugo Meynell (1981) even claims that Jung was more scientific than Freud (p. 195).

- 9 Danto's book on *Nietzsche as Philosopher* has already been referred to in previous chapters. My reference is to p. 154.

F A Lea's study (1972) is called *The Tragic Philosopher*. On p. 184 he tells us that: 'What Nietzsche signified by the Will to Power was that basic human impulse which in his earlier works he had tended to identify with love. What the definition signified to him is not difficult to conjecture: probably when it first occurred to him, it had as great an effect as the formula "Reverence for Life" had on Albert Schweitzer. In a flash it co-ordinated all the seemingly unrelated psychological observations of *Human, All Too Human*, *The Dawn of Day* and *The Joyful Wisdom*; it brought a new order into the chaos of experience.' On p. 185 Lea says that the Will to Power is Nietzsche's definition of the deeper self. But doesn't Nietzsche deny we have a

self? What Nietzsche's actual view of the self is is far from clear. He certainly attacks the belief in a single enduring soul or self. This is just a piece of metaphysics. Nietzsche himself appears to opt for a more organic or functional account (bodily unity). How are we to interpret his famous statement about becoming who you are? In *Daybreak* Nietzsche even describes the subject as a fiction, the subject is just a grammatical tool, a linguistic device. Maybe Nietzsche views the self as a sort of multiplicity of drives, or perhaps the self is to do with the social structure. Another idea often canvassed is that of the subject as a neutral substrate. Perhaps there is just a spontaneous selection of drives and the self exists in action only? When Lea talks about Will to Power as the deep self, and Jung talks about the archetypal self, these notions would seem to bring back metaphysics. But there does seem to be something picking out the drives in Nietzsche, so he requires a self in however minimal a sense. Most commentators agree on this.

- 10 *The New Nietzsche* collection of papers gives a good indication of how Nietzsche tends to get read in France these days. See especially Allison's introduction to this collection (pp xiv, xv) which gives his assessment of Nietzsche's understanding of language and metaphor, and also an analysis of metaphor as an analogue for the Will to Power.
- 11 William Barrett's classic study of existentialism is called *Irrational Man* (1962). See especially Chapter 8 (p. 199) for the reference to Will to Power as the essence of Being.  
  
John Richardson's (1996) book already referred to above is an advanced text indispensable to the Nietzsche scholar. His analysis of the Will to Power concept is especially illuminating. See his first chapter entitled 'Being'.
- 12 The Nehamas volume has already been frequently referred to in previous chapters.
- 13 *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* by Maudemarie Clark is available in paperback and published by Cambridge University Press (1990). Clark's dual notion of Will to Power is set out in great detail in Chapter 7 of her text.
- 14 See, for example, Kaufmann (1974), Chapter 6.

- 15 This refers to the Nietzsche entry prepared by Kaufmann for the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* edited by Paul Edwards, 1967. This was, until fairly recently, the standard reference work for philosophers. It has now been superseded by the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Craig (1998). Freud always held a dualistic view of the instincts. In the early work, a contrast was drawn between the life-preservative instincts and the sex instincts. After the First World War, these two groups were amalgamated together to form EROS. To preserve his dualism, Freud came up with the highly speculative notion of a death instinct or THANATOS. (See Chapter 9 of Midgley, 1983, called 'The Notion of Instinct'.) However, we have to be careful with Nietzsche's use of the word 'instinctual'. In some notes of 1872, Nietzsche defined the term. He did not mean some biological directive or disposition, but a Schopenhauerian essence of the individual, a part of its character (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Rhetoric and Language*, pp 209 – 210). Nietzsche never re-examined this concept in the light of his dropping of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Nehamas (1985) has the following comment: 'But Nietzsche, I think, construes instinctive thinking and acting (which he considers not primitive forms that underlie action and thought, but sophisticated goals that must be pursued and mastered) as modes that specifically preclude the conscious differentiation between subject and object, doer and deed' (p. 244). Paul Thiele points out Nietzsche's terminological inconsistency on this topic. See his book, p. 69, including the footnote at the bottom of the page.
- 16 See Clark (1990), p. 210.
- 17 Kaufmann goes on at this point to refer to the well-known footnote on Hamlet in Freud's great work on Dreams (1899): 'Neurotic symptoms, dreams, works of literature and, one might add, human behaviour generally, are capable of over-interpretation and indeed demand nothing less than this before they can be fully understood'. Nietzsche perhaps overlooks this point, says Kaufmann.
- 18 The source of this quotation from *Daybreak* is Nehamas, 1985, p. 74.
- 19 In a very interesting paper called 'Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology' first published in *The European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Professor Bernard

Williams argues that the mind is not moral, so free will, autonomy, etc. are called into question. What is required is a more naturalistic account of the mind. This now seems to agree more with the findings of modern scientific psychology. The American behaviourist, B F Skinner (1971), caused a furore in the seventies by arguing for something similar in his book called *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

- 20 Fr Copleston (1975), in an appendix to his work on Nietzsche subtitled *Philosopher of Culture*, attempts to defend Nietzsche as a metaphysician. According to Copleston (following W H Walshe), Nietzsche is offering us an immanent metaphysics even if he clearly rejects a transcendent metaphysics. By immanent metaphysics is to be understood the provision of a worldview which goes beyond the sphere of empirical science. According to Copleston: 'The generalised theory of the Will to Power can thus be presented as a sweeping empirical hypothesis. The general hypothesis is, however, the result of a striving after conceptual mastery over reality as a whole. I do not wish to deny that this tendency is present also in science. But science takes the form of the particular sciences, whereas Nietzsche goes beyond the distinguishable fields of particular sciences to the statement of a general view, an overall vision of the universe. So, it seems to me quite natural to speak of inductive metaphysics as contrasted with an a-priori metaphysics of which Spinozism is, I suppose, the paradigm case' (Copleston, 1975, p. 228).

Furthermore, Copleston doubts if Nietzsche's generalized theory of the Will to Power could count as a scientific hypothesis using Popper's falsifiability criterion (p. 230). Copleston's ultimate conclusion is to interpret 'Nietzsche's generalized theory of the Will to Power as an essay in revisionary metaphysics. If one disagrees with it, it is not so much a question of falsifying it, in a scientific sense, as of producing a different theory and trying to exhibit it as more adequate, less one-sided, more consistent, and so on' (p. 230).

Lesley Chamberlain, in her recent book *Nietzsche in Turin* (1997), describes Nietzsche as 'a closet metaphysician'.

- 21 For Danto's influential discussion on interpretation, see Chapter 8 of his book, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (Danto, 1980, pp 226 – 228).

- 22 If Will to Power is not just an interpretation, what is it? a TRUE interpretation.
- 23 This author has already been mentioned above. Her overall thesis, though, relies heavily on the idea that truth is an illusion, and that metaphor is primary. The reference for my quotation is pp 82 – 83. The full title of this work is *Religious Imagination and Language in Emerson and Nietzsche* (Makarushka, 1994).
- 24 If Nietzsche is not any sort of metaphysician, is he best labelled a naturalist? Well, Nietzsche can only be called a naturalist in a highly qualified sense. He does not affirm an order of nature; that would still be too metaphysical for him. So he uses the term more like a rhetorical device to contrast with metaphysics. Nietzsche is critical of 'laws of nature' approach, especially in GS. For more on this topic, see the essay by Daniel Conway called 'Returning to Nature' in *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*, (ed.) P R Sedgwick, pp 31 – 52.
- 25 See Copleston's book, p. 94 for more on Adler's psychology and the comparison with Nietzsche. Kaufmann also discusses this on p. 278 of his book (1974).
- 26 Sebastian Gardner once remarked in a graduate seminar on Nietzsche that he could find nothing determinate in Nietzsche's psychology except, of course, Will to Power as a basic motive.
- 27 Michael Tanner gives a useful summary of the Third Essay *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp 73 – 76. Douglas Smith's own introduction to his Oxford translation of this work is also to be recommended.
- 28 I wish to acknowledge that my argument here is relying very closely on Clark's (1990) explication. It was she who made me realize the importance of section 230 in BGE. My summary is based on her pp 235 – 244.
- 29 According to Michael Tanner (*Nietzsche*, p. 48): 'Zarathustra is the herald of the *Übermensch*, but is not one himself. Yet they share many characteristics, and it seems often that the best handle we can get on the *Übermensch* is that he is a heightened version of Zarathustra'. And on p. 50 he continues: 'The *Übermensch* is the being who is prepared to say YES to whatever comes along, because joy and sorrow are, as always for Nietzsche from the Primal Oneness of BT onwards, inseparable. So, despite the horror of existence up to now, he is prepared to affirm it

all. That, at any rate, is how I understand it and him. But then, on p. 65, he remarks: “that one has to imagine all too much about the *Übermensch*, that blank cheque which Zarathustra issues without any directions about cashing it, for him to be helpful” ’.

Paul Thiele (1990) in his chapter on the Overman (Chapter 9) says that: ‘Greatness is the nearing of perfection; the Overman is the ideal of human being. He fosters the emergence of greatness’ (p. 184). On the next page, he writes: ‘The Overman is the perfectly ordered soul and does not partake in the heroic struggle of existence. he is a united self, a self without a shadow’. But surely ‘a completely shadowless existence is impossible for man’? On this reading, Nietzsche’s Overman is a God substitute. He represents the state of perfection for which man must strive. He is super-human. One is never an Overman, for, in a sense he is above all ideals.

To the empiricist, this all sounds much too metaphysical, even mystical. Maudemarie Clark thinks that the *Übermensch* is still closely tied to the Ascetic Ideal and is therefore unsuitable as a counter-ideal. Why? Because, like the ascetic priests, Zarathustra treats our lives as valuable only as the means to a form of life that is actually their negation. Two other possibilities present themselves at this point – Eternal Recurrence and the Will to Power. I have already said enough about Will to Power, so let me focus briefly on Eternal Recurrence as an ideal.

Already, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Eternal Recurrence seems to be acting as a replacement for the ascetic ideal.

The Eternal Recurrence of the same refers to the idea that all events recur infinitely in an identical manner and order. The cosmological version of this doctrine only appears in the unpublished notes. I agree with the many commentators (Dr Simon May being the most recent) who argue that one can with reason be sceptical about ER as a cosmological hypothesis ‘because there is no reason why probability should lead us to expect that given infinite time all possible events will occur even once let alone that they will recur in an identical form and order!’

In view of this, I think that perhaps a better interpretation of ER is given by Bernd Magnus who talks about it as an existential imperative, i.e. it is a certain attitude



towards one's life rather than a theory about the nature of time or a grand thesis about the meaning of existence. In GS (section 341), Nietzsche shows no interest in the truth of the recurrence cosmology and just uses it to formulate a practical doctrine or ideal. Soll adopts a similar line when he says that Nietzsche's main concern is not the truth of ER but the psychological consequences of accepting it. What would it mean ethically and psychologically to affirm such a hypothesis? The recurrence cosmology just provides a device for articulating Nietzsche's ideal of the life-affirming person. One is just willing to live one's life all over again. It is not a requirement that one believe that ER be probable or even logically possible. As Maudemarie Clark puts it, 'The ideal of affirming ER values the whole process of living and thereby overcomes the ascetic ideal's devaluation of human life even while pushing us to go beyond its present form'. ER is just a test or decision criterion for the affirmation of life. Nietzsche is inviting us to play a game, but in an uncritical manner. Nietzsche doesn't want us to act like Zarathustra who turns his will to power against human life, and takes revenge against it. As Clark points out, this is more reminiscent of the ascetic ideal and the old values. Nietzsche's hope is for new philosophers who will create new values, and who will have a much more positive outlook on the virtues. Their acceptance of ER will act as a test of whether they are non-ascetic and life-affirming. Nietzsche believes that there is a need for ideals because there is a need for the internalization of WP and that the role of philosophers is to provide them.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

### Nietzsche's Vision

*'...that the ultimate nature of the world is to have no orderly structure: in itself, the world is chaos with no laws, no reason and no purpose'* (Nehamas, 1985, pp 42 – 43)

Supposing there exists a doctrine of Will to Power, one that can be unpacked 'analytically' as a psychological principle, is it to be comprehended ontologically, as unpublished notes from the Bequest seem to indicate, or as an image for the self in transformation? We have already encountered the Will to Power concept enlisted in Chapter 3 as a potential explanation for physiologically grounded behaviour, although this is put forward as a thought experiment (BGE 36).

Some commentators, Richardson being the most recent, have interpreted this well-known section from BGE as evidence that Nietzsche espoused a cosmological theory. Will to Power is seen as the fundamental stuff of which reality is composed. In the main body of the text, I have tried to combat this reading, as it draws heavily on the later *Nachlass*. I follow Clark in maintaining that the psychological observation aspect of the Will to Power is put forward as a truth, but that the cosmological version is just Nietzsche's image of how he would like the world to be. It is not to be taken as a truth or a piece of knowledge.

Nevertheless, it may prove useful to attempt a reconstruction of this alternative viewpoint here, as it forms a striking contrast to my own reading of Nietzsche's texts. My main concern has been with Will to Power as an explication of human behaviour. Alternatively, one could accept 'Will to Power' as a hypothesis about nature, but then it would be so vague as to be without hope of verification. Nietzsche undoubtedly often went too far in claiming Will to Power as a force in all things, even the inorganic. Such

claims have the appearance of being metaphysical, rather than a generalization based on experience.

Leslie Paul Thiele (1990, p. 161) goes so far as to describe Nietzsche as a 'this worldly mystic'. The emphasis on reason is down-played, and intuition is stressed instead. Like many other writers, Thiele draws our attention to the special affinity between Nietzsche and the pre-Platonic philosopher/psychologist Heraclitus. This pre-Socratic material existed in fragments, and so allowed Nietzsche great freedom in the interpretation of this dark philosopher's thoughts. No well-worked-over or dusty manuscripts survive; just some extracts. (For these, see *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 1987.) The visions of these philosophers were labelled philosophy, but on the whole their likeness to myths is clear. Any delving into early Greek philosophy conveys the impression that abstract theorizing gave them great difficulty for their work was closely tied to the human person. Nietzsche, of course, approved of this. Heraclitus was Nietzsche's favourite pre-Socratic philosopher. He presents him to us as a Platonic and Kantian critic. The thing in itself, or the Forms are not available to us. So what, then, is the real? Heraclitus could reply that *becoming* was the real, that change or activity was the essence of reality. Nietzsche saw this as a good way round the *Ding an Sich*. He also approved of the stress on ambiguity in Heraclitus, and his ludic characterization of experience. In an early, unpublished piece called *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873) (PTAG), he tells us:

'All contradictions run into harmony, invisible to the common human eye, yet understandable by one who, like Heraclitus, is related to the contemplative god' (pp 61 – 62).

Heraclitus goes on to view everything as a game played by Zeus, the chief of the Homeric gods. In this play, he created our world. But he also has a tendency to destroy in order to recreate, to play once again. In this early book fragment, Nietzsche expresses it like this:

'Play, as artists and children engage in it...exhibits coming to be and passing away, structuring and destroying without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And, as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys...' (p. 62, *ibid.*).

Basically, it was a tragic world, in which man was viewed 'as a completely unfree necessity'. Nietzsche pictured the Heraclitean world as innocent and amoral. Man could merely view the world as artistic creation. Heraclitus all but arrived at the point of envisaging existence as an aesthetic phenomenon. At this stage, the artist was very much a cultural hero for Nietzsche, as evidenced in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He affirmed the status of play, metaphor, illusion and myth. But, then along came Parmenides and the Eleatics who introduced a fissure between appearance and reality. They were responsible for the promotion of the logical drive in philosophy. For Parmenides, the real was motionless and unitary. It was devoid of space and time. Plato would, in turn, strengthen this strand and pass it on into the mainstream of Western thought. Nietzsche for one expresses his distaste for such an overly rational development in early Greek philosophy. Heraclitus was closer to Schopenhauer in that he held that things have no existence apart from their interaction and this interaction takes the shape of a continuous conflict or strife.

Becoming originates out of a war of opposites. The enduring, and to us, seemingly persistent qualities express only the temporary victory of one of the combatants. We are told that Heraclitus denies Being altogether. Nietzsche admits that this total instability of all reality is an appalling prospect. Everything becomes, and nothing ever *is*. But the Greeks had the courage to face this frightening predicament. As Nietzsche pointed out in *Twilight of the Idols*, (see especially the section called 'What I Owe to the Ancients', TI, no. 5) The Hellenic affirmation was not a retreat from pain and life's challenges, but acceptance of reality as it was for all eternity. Nietzsche, at this time, agreed with Heraclitus and opposed Plato when he wrote, 'the whole of reality lies simply in its acts'.

Heraclitus famously announced that '*character is destiny*', and again Nietzsche accepts this. He believes that the individual is a product of nature rather than nurture, the carrier of innate drives and evaluations which can be neither created nor destroyed. At best, such drives might be rearranged or re-ordered (see Thiele, 1990, p. 207). Lea (1972) also comments on this in his tome and cites a passage from *The Will to Power* notes to show that Nietzsche felt that Darwin had put too much emphasis on the environment.

‘...the influence of environment is nonsensically overrated in Darwin: the essential factor in the process of life is precisely the tremendous inner power to shape and create forms, which merely uses, exploits environment...’ (p. 267)

So, environment is not so much a determining source on the individual as a force to be determined and exploited by the individual. Thiele confirms this (p. 208).

We have to realize of course, that this alternative view of reality is closely bound up with Nietzsche’s early account of truth. Truth is fictive and grounded in metaphor. At this stage, Nietzsche would have agreed with his mentor Heraclitus that truth is grasped in ‘rapture’ through intuitions rather than via the rope-ladder reasoning of Parmenides (PTAG 6, p. 69). This alternative vision of reality also implies a reading of perspectivism antipodal to the one I give in Chapter 4 below. Radical interpreters would largely agree with Danto’s line here. He equates the notion that common sense is only our perspective with the claim that it is a fiction, admittedly one that we find both necessary and useful. He writes that, ‘We cannot speak of a true perspective, but only the perspective that prevails’, that ‘we can do little more than insist on our perspective and try, if we can, to impose it on other people’ (Danto, 1980, p. 77).

In the main body of the text, I have argued against the ‘primacy of metaphor’ thesis, and concur with Dr Clark that the ‘truth is an illusion’ idea applies at best to the early Nietzsche. My own reading of Nietzsche’s texts has its source, not so much in Heraclitus, but in Aristotle. The contrast between these two types of approach is well brought out in a paper by the late Sarah Kofman in *The New Nietzsche* collection, called ‘Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis’ (starting on p. 201, MIT edition). The two styles of expression are striking. Aristotle emphasizes logic and reason, whilst Heraclitus stresses intuition and the artistic instinct. Kofman, as a New Nietzschean, is concerned to rehabilitate metaphor. Nevertheless, the following excerpts from her paper capture very well the clash between these two giants of early Greek philosophy:

‘This is also not astonishing that Aristotle accuses Heraclitus of disobeying the principle of non-contradiction by his enigmatic formulation that “everything at every time reunites all contraries in itself”. But, even when Heraclitus uses conceptual language, when intuition necessarily has to fail, he still falls subject to the charge of

inconsistency... The fact that Aristotle charges the pre-Socratics with a “crime against reason” reveals his own reductionist tendencies in reading previous thinkers. Aristotle would then have had the privilege of realizing certain truths that were only implicit in earlier philosophers – implicit meaning potential, confused, obscure or unrecognized. Mythic philosophy contains a hidden *logos* for Aristotle, one not yet articulated; it is the childhood of philosophy. For Aristotle, metaphorical writing is no indication of an affirmative and flourishing life; rather it signifies a lack of maturity; it is an incomplete state...’.

It comes as no surprise to find that Kofman disapproves of this approach. She continues:

‘By regarding the pre-Socratics in this way, Aristotle takes away their originality, their personality, and submits them to his own authority’.

According to Kofman:

‘The kind of reading by which Aristotle absorbs the individuality of each philosopher into the identity of philosophy as such – into Aristotle’s own starting point – is the antinomy of that practiced by Nietzsche...’ (p. 211).

Aristotle, of course, reverses the emphasis on metaphor and prioritizes the concept instead. This incurs the disapproval of Kofman, for she wishes to reinstate the ‘primacy of metaphor’ thesis.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that what Kofman has written represents the correct interpretation – how would this alter the reading offered of the Will to Power? What would Nietzsche’s alternative metaphysics look like? Well, David B Allison, in his introduction to the *New Nietzsche*, has a ready answer to this question. He writes (p. xiv), ‘perpetually active, incomplete, manifold, and alive, the metaphor not only characterizes a movement of thought, it also stands as an analogue for what exists. The metaphor is an analogical expression for the dynamic flow of appearances themselves – what Nietzsche calls the Will to Power...’.

Let us suppose that Nietzsche, together with many of his followers on the Continent, is correct in believing that the character of things is to engage in constant activity; what general pictures of the world does this view imply? I propose to label it a *Metaphysics of Events*. For, if there is a metaphysics to be found in Nietzsche (Nehamas, for one, doubts

that there is), then it will be a dynamic '*process*' metaphysics (not unlike A N Whitehead's), rather than a substance metaphysics. It will be a metaphysics of becoming, and not of being.

'No things remain, but only dynamic quanta, in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta: their essence lies in their relation to all other quanta, in their effect upon the same' (WP, p. 635).

'In the beginning was the event', as Lea puts it. Nietzsche is rejecting the Cartesian idea of substance (mind, body, God). He attacks Descartes' famous '*Cogito*' argument. Descartes can only conclude that thinking is going on, not that 'I am thinking'. He even goes further than this. Even the assumption that thought is taking place is dubious. For Nietzsche, thinking is just a term we have got. To describe the process going on is to falsify it. *It is an activity* (WP 484). He seems not to be too worried about the idea of mental states being owned. For him, mental life is an ever-changing, interweaving process. There are no discrete patterns, just various interacting forces. Nietzsche is arguing that there is no agent separate from the action. You can have the concept of doing, acting, willing without having a subject. So, what is there, then? According to Nietzsche, there is *a subjectless flux* in which everything is becoming. There are processes, forces, which interact and oppose one another. Nothing ever simply is. There is, instead, an ever-shifting set of relations changing all the time. He does not believe that things can have properties that attach to them independently of the existence of other things.

'That things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity is a quite idle hypothesis; it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing' (WP 560).

The thing in itself is eschewed and replaced by a sort of philosophy of internal relations. The concept '*substance*', Nietzsche writes, 'is a consequence of the notion of the subject: not the reverse! If we relinquish the soul, "the subject", the pre-condition for substance in general, disappears' (WP 485). He claims that we can still describe actions without ontology. The process that leads me to construct all these various beliefs is ultimately the Will to Power. I am my body, and self-conscious subject is thrown up by my body. F A

Lea (1972) sums up this alternative scenario as follows: 'If the primary constituent of matter is nothing that acts, but rather activity itself, Will to Power, then we must banish from our minds the concept of anything that is merely the passive recipient of external impacts and compulsions'. (p. 267)

The concept of an object is a fiction. 'It is not an enduring substance that underlies its features' (Nehamas, 1985). If one may use Nietzsche's own words: '*A thing is the sum of its effects.*' (WP 551).

However, such a view would seem to embroil us in paradox. If we can no longer think of 'wills' as 'things' we can form no clear mental image of them. They escape representational thinking. Grasping things as events *simpliciter* seems anti-commonsense. It demands that we forego the notion that events consist of items 'that they are constituted by the interaction of things'. Our ordinary language fails us here, for we are asked to comprehend the universe as a family of events made up of nothing in particular, a sort of world of relations without *relata*. (See Magnus and Higgins (eds), 1996, *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 7 for the source of these objections.)

No-one can deny that Nietzsche flirted with the cosmological version of the Will to Power for some considerable time. But he failed to come up with any satisfactory arguments for this hypothesis. There is a distinct lack of experimental evidence. Its status is akin to that of ether in the 1870s – an element of nature which could not be detected. But ether was abandoned when a series of crucial experiments were agreed, to which it failed to measure up. But, Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' hypothesis is in an even more insecure position than this. Not only were there no crucial experiments, but the accumulated wisdom of centuries seemed to controvert it. As Magnus points out (in his paper 'The Use and Abuse of the Will to Power' in Solomon and Higgins (eds), 1988, p. 233): 'Without the (later) *Nachlass*, it is virtually impossible to read the Will to Power as a first-order description of the way the world is in itself, as a description of the world's intelligible character'.

One final issue needs further consideration, namely the status of Becoming. As we have just seen, according to Nietzsche in the *Nachlass*, there is no substance. There are no eternal truths or absolutes. Everything is continually changing. All is appearance.



Becoming is the ruling concept. In a famous phrase, Nietzsche exhorts us to '*Become who you are*'. But, haven't we just been given the distinct impression that we are not anything in particular? Don't we have to create the self? Thiele has a whole chapter on this issue. He follows a sort of Jungian view that the self is already in existence. So, it is a question of unfolding and not creation *ex nihilo*. Lea also lends support to this maturationist approach. An oak will only grow from an acorn, and not from a mustard seed. As Thiele puts it: 'The paradox contained within the dictum "Become who you are" reveals the nature of living one's life as a work of art'. Becoming is an unending process without any final state. For once, we have rejected ontology, teleology is ruled out also. We humans, however, refuse to countenance the flux of existence, and are seduced into believing in abiding entities which have purposes or goals. We imagine Being in place of Becoming (Thiele, 1990, p. 107).

But what if you are not convinced by this Heraclitean approach? Another possibility may be that Nietzsche is using the word 'becoming' just as he used the word 'natural', to act as a foil to metaphysics. The Western philosophical tradition has been dominated by the concept of Being. We have only to think of Plato. Nietzsche is putting forward the notion of becoming as, perhaps, the only alternative to the rejection of Plato's metaphysical realism. Nietzsche makes it crystal clear that he sees Plato's philosophy as anti-life, anti-the senses, anti-body and, of course, anti-becoming. Lange, whom Nietzsche had read in 1866, said of Plato: 'The further he was from the facts, the nearer he thought himself to the truth'. Questions of consistency can be raised with regard to what Nietzsche says about the nature of reality here. If to know is to schematize, to impose form on what is constantly changing, it is man who transforms becoming into being, or who, at any rate, constructs stable beings out of the flux of becoming. But, if the objects of knowledge are constructions, how can Nietzsche possibly know what the 'real' world is like? To assert that reality in itself is simply a flux of becoming is to make a positive assertion which we are not entitled to make, if every view of the world is just a mental construction. This raises in an acute form the problems posed by the appearance–reality distinction or the lack of it. (On these points, see Copleston, 1975, pp 267 – 268.)

I favour the view that Nietzsche put a great deal of stress on Becoming to correct the extreme emphasis on Being in Plato and others. He wished to emphasize that we are *creatures of history*. We live a temporal existence and have to face death at some point. In this sense, Nietzsche could also be seen as a proto-existentialist. John Richardson (1996), in his chapter 'Becoming' in *Nietzsche's System*, agrees with such sentiments. His view is that 'Nietzsche's insistence on becoming is not a denial of all ontologies, but a key premise in one ontology' (p. 13). Richardson is especially convincing when he argues that Nietzsche tends 'to hear the term "being" in the Parmenidean–Platonic sense – in such a way that (roughly) only what never changes in any respect can "be"'. Because he thinks that change of a special sort is basic to the world, he places himself at the opposite extreme from these and chooses to reflect this by inverting their own contrast between being and becoming' (p. 74, *ibid.*).

As already indicated above (several times), Nietzsche's understanding of becoming relies heavily on Heraclitus. Some recent scholars have even disputed whether Heraclitus had a doctrine of flux or becoming. Richardson mentions Professor David Wiggins's well-known paper on Heraclitus in a footnote ('Heraclitus' Conception of Flux, Fire and Material Persistence', reprinted in *Language and Logos*, (eds) M C Nussbaum and M Schofield, 1982). Professor Wiggins concedes that Heraclitus does have a doctrine of universal flux, but he adds: 'The rubbish that philosophers have sometimes talked about rivers or men not being but becoming seems to be entirely of Plato's and other post-Parmenidean philosophers' confection' (Nussbaum and Schofield, p. 26).

This confirms Richardson's own remarks above about Nietzsche's mistaking his own theory as not being an ontological one because he took over the Platonic contrast between being and becoming. Plato is now taken to have distorted Heraclitus's meaning in his famous version of the river image: 'Heraclitus somewhere says that everything changes and nothing stays, and likening beings to the flow of a river he says, that you could not step twice into the same river (*Cratylus*, 402a)'.

It can be argued that Heraclitus doesn't take the flow to mean that the said river does not persist. But if Heraclitus accepts things, if not substances, then he is not as radical as at first thought. The issues here are complex and subtle and are explored in great detail in

Richardson's chapter. Note, for example, what Richardson says about Aristotle's position on change in contrast to Heraclitus (p. 85 footnote). 'Compositional (material) change if overridden by functional (formal) continuity. Whereas Heraclitus presents the formal organizing power – his *logos* – as a generalized cosmic principle, Aristotle catalogs it in a host of species forms'.

As I interpret him, then what Nietzsche rejects is ideas of absolute being as in Plato's forms, or the Kantian things in themselves, but he has no need to deny the being of ordinary things in our common-sense world.

In composing this Appendix, I have drawn freely on the following sources:

*Nietzsche's Systems* by John Richardson

*Nietzsche, Life as Literature* by Alexander Nehamas

*The New Nietzsche*, ed. David Allison

*Nietzsche, a Study of Heroic Individualism* by Paul Thiele

*Nietzsche – Philosopher of Culture* by Fr F Copleston

'Nietzsche's Image of Chaos' in Stanley Rosen's *The Limits of Analysis*, Yale University Press, 1985, p. 190.

*Nietzsche* by Richard Schacht, especially Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER 4

## Perspectivism and Truth – are they compatible?

*'It's clear enough that Nietzsche is in some sense a perspectivist' – Richardson, Nietzsche's System*

In the previous chapter we have seen what the doctrine of the Will to Power explains for Nietzsche and how it operates. But doesn't this considerable web of theory once again presuppose the truth of Nietzsche's diagnostic assessments? We are told that the Will to Power is life-affirming, and that the Will to Truth is but the latest expression of the ascetic ideal. I take it that such claims are put forward as truth-bearing ones. In a sense, the Will to Truth seems inescapable. But how, then, are we to explicate Nietzsche's celebrated notion of perspectivism? On one reading at least, this view seems to be closely bound up with the falsificationist theory of truth which I have already discussed in Chapter 2 above. A further embarrassment for my interpretation to date is a major restatement of perspectivism which is to be found in the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1) which is, of course, a late work. If this section also brings back the falsificationist thesis, then my whole argument is in jeopardy.

Nietzsche clearly does suggest a perspectival view at various points in the early 'Truth and Lie' paper, but it is only in HAH that we first encounter a defence of his famed perspectivism in the published works. According to John Richardson, perspectivism can be given: '...a first approximate sense [in] that (not just belief and appearance) but TRUTH and so BEING are perspectival, or different for different perspectives; thus there is no way that the world, or any of its parts is 'in itself' or 'objectively'. There's no truth or being *simpliciter*, only the 'true-for' and 'is for'...' (pp 9 – 10). This definition

expresses a viewpoint antipodal to the one I shall be arguing for in this chapter. It portrays Nietzsche as a sort of radical relativist. Alasdair MacIntyre, for one, adopts this sort of position in his many discussions of Nietzsche in his books on moral and political issues (2). On this reading of perspectivism 'what we believe is supposed to be a product of one tradition to which there are always significant alternatives with as great a claim to truth and accuracy and which are therefore immune to criticism' (Magnus and Higgins (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, p. 244). Professor MacIntyre then criticizes Nietzsche's perspectivism because it: 'fails to recognise how integral the conception of truth is to tradition-constituted forms of enquiry. It is this which leads perspectivists to suppose that one could temporarily adopt the standpoint of a tradition and then exchange it for another, as one might wear first one costume and then another, or as one might act one part in one play and then a quite different part in a quite different play. But genuinely to adopt the standpoint of a tradition commits one to its view of what is true and false and in so committing one, prohibits one from adopting a rival standpoint' (1990, p. 367). But I have already argued in Chapter 2 that Nietzsche does accept that things are true in a conventional sense. He has got to accept the equivalence principle or a minimal theory of truth, otherwise his position succumbs to paradox. So, in a sense Nietzsche is already committed to a tradition-based truth. There appears to be a confusion of terminology here. MacIntyre seems to be equating perspectivism with relativism. *These need to be kept separate*. Just because truth is socially constructed doesn't mean it is relative. And some traditions can be shown to be better than others. So, Nietzsche would simply agree with MacIntyre's point.

Also in the relativist camp is the extremely influential account of perspectivism given by Richard Rorty (3). According to this version, Nietzsche's perspectivism is not a *theory* of anything and certainly not a theory of knowledge. For, to say that there are only perspectives or interpretations is meant to include all the old facts as just that – *interpretations* – Nietzsche's use of words like 'fact', 'truth', 'error', etc. are but rhetorical devices used to parody our desire for a theory of knowledge or truth. As the editors of *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* describe it (see their introduction, pp 5 – 6): "knowledge" and "truth" are compliments paid to successful discourse, as

Rorty and others have suggested. To give an account of such success is always to say why this specific item is true or known – for example, the superiority of the heliocentric over the geocentric account of planetary motion. There can be explanations and illustrations of successful discourse on a case-by-case basis, illustrations and explanations of the relative attractions of various competing concrete proposals, but there is no way to slide an unwobbling pivot between theory and reality which will register an unmediated fit between word and world. There can only be a misconceived “theory of” successful discourse on this view’.

In a more recent book, Rorty (1989) has characterized Nietzsche as an ironist convinced of reality’s blind contingency. He has also described the present age as post-Nietzschean. The ironist, Rorty writes (4): ‘thinks of final vocabularies as poetic achievements *rather than* as fruits of diligent inquiry according to antecedently formulated criteria’ (p. 77). Rorty also drops any belief in a foundational human nature (p. 176).

At the other extreme might be found commentators like Heidegger and Richardson who bring ontology back in. These writers give priority to Will to Power and then face the difficult task of reconciling this metaphysics with Nietzsche’s perspectivism. According to Richardson (p. 11): ‘Nietzsche’s thought includes both a metaphysics and a perspectivism, once these are more complexly grasped...it’s an ontology of perspectives’.

But are such essentialist viewpoints or a rabid relativism the only options available here? One might choose to steer a middle course between these two opposed positions. That’s why the Clark reading has so much to recommend it. Bernd Magnus is correct when he describes Clark’s view of perspectivism as no more than the idea ‘that the very notion of a thing in itself is incoherent’. So the force of this claim is primarily ontological (Solomon and Higgins (eds), *Reading Nietzsche*, p. 153). As we have already discussed it in Chapter 2, this amounts to a sort of neo-Kantian position – that the world, as it appears to us, is constructed by our particular human faculties. Richard Schacht, in his more recent paper in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Magnus and Higgins, 1996, p. 168) feels that this response is an inadequate one, and he takes Nietzsche to be proposing more substantial theses concerning truth and knowledge (5).

But there is also recent support backing the Clark view of perspectivism. I refer to the excellent paper by Professor Brian Leiter in the Schacht volume (6). This strengthens the overall account I have been trying to develop thus far of Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge. Leiter draws our attention to the fact that one particular interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism 'has attained the status of near orthodoxy' in the secondary literature. He labels this *the Received View* (RV for short). It attributes to Nietzsche the following four claims:

- (i) The world has no determinate nature or structure.
- (ii) Our concepts and theories do not 'describe' or 'correspond' to this world because it has no determinate character.
- (iii) Our concepts and theories are 'mere' interpretations or mere perspectives (reflecting our pragmatic need, at least on some accounts).
- (iv) No perspectives can enjoy an epistemic privilege over any other, because there is no epistemically privileged mode of access to this characterless world.

It could be argued that Nietzsche sometimes runs (i) to (iv) together, or confuses them (7).

The *locus classicus* for this sort of 'amalgam' can be found in Danto's book on Nietzsche, especially in Chapter III, Section 3. It is also espoused by Derrida and his pupil Sarah Kofman. Other defenders include Richard Rorty and Alan Schrift. Leiter mounts a very detailed and impressive argument combating this view. I shall try to summarize this argument in a moment, but to begin with let me make a few more general comments about perspectivism. First of all, the doctrine can also be applied to morals, for one could claim that there is no one scale of values, and no single way of measuring people and their virtues. But I shall prescind from such discussion in the present context. Secondly, it is germane to ask at this point: how do perspectives originate? Obviously, they are closely bound up with the Will to Power. According to John Richardson: 'We've seen that, as Will to Power, a drive aims at ongoing growth in its distinctive activity. Nietzsche's perspectivism begins in the thought that this *telic* directedness goes together with an *intentional* one, with being a perspective 'at' or 'on' some intentional content. Just by virtue of striving in the way it does, every drive involves, is partly a

particular view: a view of its purpose or end, and of the surroundings as helps or hindrances to that end' (p. 35).

As Richardson reads him, Nietzsche's 'power ontology' forms a sort of 'objective precondition' for his perspectivism. But one has to be careful here, as Richardson accepts the cosmological view of the Will to Power. For him, it is equivalent to Nietzsche's metaphysics. It affords the being or essence of things. Nevertheless, his viewpoint accords with the Clark–Leiter interpretation at least to some extent. Clark would find Richardson's emphasis on metaphysics beyond the pale, and she also is concerned to rebut Heidegger's account of Nietzsche. Thirdly, I want to take issue with Michael Tanner (see his *Nietzsche*, p. 64). In his brief comments on perspectivism, he argues that we are not given enough information to form 'an uncontroversial account'. He feels that the doctrine would collapse even under the gentlest analytic probing. I hope to demonstrate that this is not the case.

Professor Brian Leiter actually states in his 1994 paper that his thesis agrees in broad outline with that promulgated by Dr Clark, and also argued for in this study. For, if the Received View is accepted, the result is an extreme scepticism, and Nietzsche's whole outlook as interpreted so far, would be rendered incoherent. According to Leiter, we cannot view the world as we please. There have to be some constraints. Also, Nietzsche must claim 'epistemic privilege' with regard to the alternative views which he criticizes. He is required to demonstrate that these views are false and his own views correct. On the Received Views, as Leiter points out: 'There appears to be no room even for Nietzsche's criticism (let alone positive claims) having anything to do with epistemic merits' (Leiter, 1994, p. 336).

But Nietzsche does have a basic standpoint from which to criticize other people's point of view. I concur with Professor Leiter that Nietzsche's mature position is broadly an empiricist/naturalistic one. I use 'empiricist' here in its original Greek meaning, i.e. knowledge through the senses. Sense experience is the basic source of all authentic knowledge. I have already had occasion to refer to Nietzsche's use of the word 'natural' as a sort of foil for the metaphysical. In explaining things, Nietzsche often resorts to the natural facts. He continually appeals to physiological facts and to the importance of



psychology (see Chapter 3 above for more on this). As Leiter (1994, p. 338) reminds us: 'He repeatedly attacks interpretations of phenomena in moral or religious terms for appealing to "imaginary causes" while misconstruing the *Real* natural phenomena'.

But for Nietzsche to say this, implies that his naturalistic claims 'must enjoy an "epistemic privilege" over the moral and religious one'. But in accordance with the RV, this would not be possible. Leiter goes on to point out that the RV also causes problems with regard to Nietzsche's dismissal of any appearance–reality dichotomy in *Twilight of the Idols*. For, on one reading at least, the RV, by maintaining that no view gives 'a better picture of the world as it really is' than any other, reinstates the distinction. For, on this account there are, on the one hand, epistemically equivalent 'mere' perspectives and, on the other the indescribable (and hence unknown) world 'as it really is', 'a world to which no perspective is adequate' (p. 338).

Nietzsche's perspectivism, then, as the RV presents it, seems to be self-contradictory. These can't be the 'set of epistemological commitments' which Nietzsche espouses. We require a more mature version of perspectivism, for the RV is in conflict with Nietzsche's actual practice.

In Section Three of his paper, Leiter offers some very important interpretative proposals, which enables us *to escape the RV*. I shall by-pass those points which I have already covered in detail, and focus more on new material. In subsection E, for example, Leiter remarks that Nietzsche often disparages our *overestimation of the value of truth*, i.e. we tend to treat it as an absolute value: 'The sanctimonious pursuit of truth has long obscured both the ulterior moralistic motivations of philosophers and the respects in which their "truths" have, in fact, simply stood "truth itself on its head" '. As Leiter puts it, Nietzsche wants 'to stand the truth right side up. At no point does he suggest that truth should be abandoned altogether as an epistemic ideal'. Leiter's next point concerns Nietzsche's use of the word 'interpretation' (subsection F). This term has occasioned much confusion, especially amongst the writers who have subscribed to *The New Nietzsche* collection. Nietzsche, more in line with present-day thinking, agrees that all knowledge involves interpretation, but he didn't intend anything pejorative in saying this. Leiter is surely right when he remarks that: 'It is only when we read a disparaging tone

into his remarks on the necessity of interpretation – when we read it as “mere” interpretation’ that we are drawn to the Received View. Yet, as ‘an inveterate old philologist’ he believes in ‘the art of reading well – of reading facts without falsifying them by interpretation (A, section 52). Such an art, however, requires that one be able to “interpret” while at the same time reporting the facts truthfully’ (p. 341, *ibid.*).

Once again, Leiter’s discussion of Nietzsche’s attacks on positivism (subsection G, p. 342) affords further evidence that the interpretation I offer of Nietzsche’s published works overall is on target. Nietzsche frequently uses the word ‘interpretation’ to signal his disagreement with the classical positivist viewpoint that ‘unmediated access to the world was possible’. Popper and subsequent philosophers of science have put paid to this doctrine, arguing that all attempts to comprehend the physical world are ‘theory laden’. The famous passage in the *Nachlass* where Nietzsche claims that ‘facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations’ is meant as a criticism of positivism which halts at phenomena (WP 481). Critics of foundationalist epistemologies like Sellars and Davidson accept that ‘no such simple epistemic access to phenomena can be had’. But this need not necessarily lead to a sort of epistemological nihilism as in the RV. Supporters of the RV seem to lapse into error at this point. As Leiter puts it, ‘a suppressed skeptical premise’ gets added to the effect that: ‘once linguistic (or theoretical or perspectival) mediation enters the picture, the facts must vanish altogether with the consequence that the world is (in Rorty’s famous phrase) ‘well lost’. Justification then becomes nothing more than a certain sort of socially sanctioned practice’ (p. 342, *ibid.*).

But does the rejection of classical positivism lead us straight into pragmatism of the American variety? Most epistemologists nowadays reject crude foundationalism which pictures justification ‘as a matter of comparing particular propositions with non-linguistic items in the world’. But they hold onto ‘the thought that there can still be some form of epistemic hierarchy’. Leiter concludes that: ‘To hold both views simultaneously will require showing that the “mediation” of interpretative perspectives does not foreclose an epistemically robust sense of knowledge or truth’ (p. 342, *ibid.*).

It is now time to turn to the text itself, to see exactly how Nietzsche present his perspectivism and what sort of theory of knowledge might be attributed to him on that

basis. The main discussion of perspectivism in the mature works is to be found in the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, section 12, so I shall focus on that. In the earlier part of this section (see below), Nietzsche attacks any metaphysics which posits the truth as essentially unknowable. He has in mind, of course, Kant's things in themselves. Then he shifts his attention to a concept closely allied to truth, namely *objectivity*. Here is the passage quoted in full:

'From now on, my dear philosophers, let us beware of the dangerous old conceptual fable which posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject", let us beware of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason", "absolute spirituality", "knowledge in itself"; for these always ask us to imagine an eye which is impossible to imagine, an eye which supposedly looks out in no particular direction, an eye which supposedly either restrains or altogether lacks the active powers of interpretation which first make seeing into seeing something – for here, then, a nonsense and non-concept is demanded of an eye. Perspectival seeing is the *only* kind of seeing there is, perspectival "knowing" the *only* kind of knowing and the *more* feelings about a matter which we allow to come to expression, the *more* eyes, different eyes through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our "conception" of it, our "objectivity" will be. But to eliminate the will completely, to suspend the feelings altogether, even assuming that we could do so: what? Would this not amount to the castration of the intellect?...?' (Nietzsche, 1887, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, D Smith, trans., 1996).

Christopher Hauke draws our attention to the highly metaphorical character of this passage. In calling knowledge 'perspectival' Nietzsche is utilizing an optical metaphor to convey information about knowing. According to Hauke:

'Perspectivism is a metaphor of epistemology as VISION, it is a way of addressing the problem of what is "true" about the world that situates this issue back with the subjective observer. From the perspectival approach, how things are arises from how they are constructed by the subject experiencing them. The "truth" of the world varies according to the various perspectives from which it is viewed. This, then, is in strict contrast to an approach such as the scientific objectivity of classical

scientific empiricism, that maintains there can be a reality that will always be true independently of any observer...' (Hauke, 2000, p. 152).

Due to paucity of space, I shall confine my discussion of perspectivism to the version given in the Leiter article. Leiter, basically, finds two major epistemological theses in the excerpt just quoted from the *Genealogy*. The first one he calls the *Doctrine of Epistemic Affectivity* (DEA for short). It states that 'all knowledge necessarily presupposes some interest or "affect" so that knowledge can never be disinterested'. The second thesis he calls a *Doctrine of Perspectives*: 'The knowledge situation is analogous to the optical situation in that both are essentially dependent on perspectives...'. But, if knowing is like seeing (DP) then there ought to be a match between the visual analogue and the Received View in epistemology. If not, then we shall have to find an alternative account of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge. Leiter proceeds to show 'that no optical analogue to the Received View is required by reflection on the ordinary features of the optical case'. In regard to our visual grasp of a thing, he puts forward four claims which he hopes will prove uncontroversial:

- 1 Necessarily we *see* an object from a particular perspective: for example, from a certain angle, from a certain distance, under certain conditions (perspectivism claim).
- 2 The more perspectives we enjoy – for example, the more angles we see the object from – the better our conception of what the object is actually like, will be (plurality claim).
- 3 We will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of vision (infinity claim).
- 4 There exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that would distort our perspective on the object: for instance, we are too far away, or the background conditions are poor (purity claim).

But these claims do not appear to accord with the Received Views of Epistemology. In the normal run of things, we don't say:

- (i) the object of vision has no determinate nature; or
- (ii) all visual perspectives on the object are equivalent in terms of their access to the object.

For this second statement immediately conflicts with the *plurality claim* above. Some optical viewpoints will just be better than others; they will be more adequate 'to the real nature of the object before our eyes'. Leiter rightly concludes that the analogy between seeing and the Received View is untenable. If we are to retain the analogy between seeing and knowing we will need to be more specific about the various components on the epistemic side of the equation. Leiter sets these out in the following manner:

- 1 Necessarily we *know* an object from a particular perspective: that is from the standpoint of particular interests and need (perspectivism claim).
- 2 The more perspectives we enjoy – for example, the more interests we employ in *knowing* the object – the better our conception of what the object is like will be (plurality claim).
- 3 We will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the *object of knowledge* (there are an infinity of interpretative interests that could be brought to bear (infinity claim)).
- 4 There exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that would distort our *knowledge* of the object: that is, certain interpretative need will distort the nature of objects (purity claim).

Again, Leiter seems right when he says that this fits Nietzsche's philosophical practice much better, but the purity claim need further clarification and we still have to discuss the DEA doctrine. As Leiter sees it: 'If we are to have the epistemic purity claim, then we must be able to make out something like the following thought: certain interpretative need and interests distort the nature of objects. We require, then, some criterion for distinguishing non-distorting and distorting need and interests' (p. 346).

Nietzsche's overall view is that the truth about reality is 'ugly'. As the poet T S Eliot put it in *Four Quartets*, 'Humankind cannot bear too much reality' (Burnt Norton) (8). Only those with a robust constitution will be able to face this awful reality. Only the strong will have the necessary non-distorting interpretative interest, so for Nietzsche the 'terrible truth' about the world will act as 'our criterion for vindicating the purity claim'. The weak, by contrast, will distort reality by resorting to illusions, myths or metaphysics. Leiter concludes, then, that we can make sense of the purity claims in its epistemic version.

Nietzsche's account of reality may be wrong, but that is a separate issue. It does not, however, affect his theory of knowledge as such.

There is one problem still remaining. Does the perspectivism claim itself – the idea that all knowing is interest based – i.e. the DEA above, undermine the doctrine of 'epistemic privilege'? Does Nietzsche accept that reality exercises no epistemic constraint on our interpretations? This would amount to the idea that there are no 'facts', only 'affective projections'. Unless we can somehow combat this view, we cannot have a viable empiricist epistemology.

Leiter in his paper tackles this complex issue on three fronts. The real Nietzsche, he contends, has an antimetaphysical thesis, a non-revisionist thesis and a perspectivist thesis. The antimetaphysical thesis amounts to this: 'We must give up...the idea that truth might be explicated in a metaphysically realist sense, as that which is available from no perspective at all (i.e. independent of all human interests) or conversely the vulgar idealist gloss that it is nothing other than what particular human interests take it to be?'.

The non-revisionist thesis is particularly important for my reading. It might be described as follows: 'On one plausible understanding, for facts about the world to be objective – to be capable, in other words, of exercising some constraint on our interpretation of them – they must *not* depend on our beliefs about them or our evidence for them. *Call this the 'independence' requirement.* The independence requirement admits of at least two construals, strong and modest, corresponding to two different sorts of objectivity. According to strong objectivity, it is global independence from human evidence or belief that is the mark of objectivity' (9). It is now generally accepted that Wittgenstein and his followers rejected this strong objectivity viewpoint. In Leiter's words: 'On the Wittgensteinian view, we simply have no intelligible idea of what a feature of the world could be that would satisfy this independence requirement, since what is the case is necessarily parasitic on our dispositions and practices'.

No sense can be made of the idea of a 'fact in itself' to use Nietzsche's own phrase. A more modest objectivity just claims that: 'distinctively human beliefs, sensibilities, practices and dispositions are a condition of the very possibility of anything being true or knowable – but this does not mean that what is the case or what beliefs are justified

depend directly on what any particular person or community believes' (10). So, 'within our epistemic practices' we can still ask our mundane questions about truth and knowledge without supposing that the requisite objectivity demanded for proper answers is one that could transcend the human point of view altogether. This, of course is very close to the idea of conceptual truth which David Hamlyn argues for, and which I have utilized in Chapter 2 to refute the falsificationist theory (11).

And so we come to what I agree is Nietzsche's mature account of perspectivism. He does recognize a distinction between true and false. He also concedes that all knowledge is in some way need-bound. 'This epistemic interest determines what piece of the object of knowledge we pick out.' But the object of knowledge is never constituted by that or any other particular interest. In a sense, it remains an independent/separate object, though not a transcendent object. It is a thing itself, but not a thing in itself. Leiter puts it in a nutshell: 'That it is human knowledge, however, is not an objection to its being knowledge'. Nietzsche, then, does have a viable doctrine of perspectivism, but it turns out to be a much less radical one than his Gallic followers would have us believe.

I have drawn extensively on Leiter's interpretation because it lends support to Maudemarie Clark's reading of perspectivism in Chapter 5 of her book, which I am convinced is the correct reading. Leiter, too, allows that Nietzsche abolished the absolutely 'true' or metaphysical world and he would also agree that the falsificationist thesis is not plausible. Clark's argument is much more detailed and focuses more directly on truth rather than on epistemology or justification. A perspectivist can deny that there is any truth in a metaphysical sense. But such a view 'is perfectly compatible with the minimal correspondence account of truth and therefore with granting that many human beliefs are true' (Clark, 1990, p. 135).

I want to conclude this chapter by looking at an interpretation of perspectivism which challenges the Clark–Leiter reading which I have been trying to defend. This alternative view also leaves the way open for the return of the falsification theory. Bernd Magnus, in his essay on 'Twilight of the Idols' called 'The Deification of the commonplace' in *Reading Nietzsche* (Magnus, 1988) puts forward a very original interpretation of perspectivism (12). To begin with, he analyses the metaphor itself in a

different way. He argues that: 'Perspectivism derives some of its intuitive force from the emerging popularity of the still picture camera in Nietzsche's time and can be understood as a generalization of its point' (p. 153). He asks us to imagine a camera taking pictures while encircling a physical object '360° about it in equidistant orbits, orbits which eventually traverse the object as if it were encased in an invisible globe'. On this analysis, a non-perspectival view of the object would amount to having simultaneous pictures of the thing in question from all the orbital points traversed by this camera. As Magnus sees it, Nietzsche wants us to consider impossible the cognitive version of this, i.e. that knowledge of the totality of interpretations that can be given of an object, its interpretations from all of the different cognitive perspectives on it. Notice, though, an immediate difference between the Clark–Leiter view and the Magnus approach. Clark agrees with Leiter that there is no view from nowhere. Seeing is always from some point of view and the position of the person invariably affects the look of the object seen. But Magnus now focuses on the fact that there are always other perspectives to be had besides the one currently occupied by the viewer. Clark (1990) herself sums up the difference here as follows: 'For Magnus we are to notice that there is no omniperspectival seeing, whereas I suggest we are to notice that there is no non-perspectival seeing'. The trouble is that these differing readings of the metaphor result in conflicting interpretations of perspectivism itself. For Clark, the metaphor only rules out anything contradictory. As she says earlier in the book: '...creative power is not limited by the inability to make a square triangle, cognitive power is not limited by the inability to have non-perspectival knowledge' (p. 134).

Magnus's reading seems to imply that we are cognitively limited, because we cannot occupy all the different cognitive perspectives. This can easily lead into the adoption of the falsificationist thesis. He admits in his article (Magnus, 1988) that, 'If there were to be such an unconditionally true perspective, such an account would perhaps require what Hilary Putnam recently has called a God's-eye view, a view from no point whatsoever save all the possible perspectives simultaneously, a notion which may well be incoherent' (p. 153). How is the defender of the Clark–Leiter account to respond to this challenge? On re-reading the passage from the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* already quoted above, I find it does contain what looks like the omniperspectival view. Nietzsche



does indicate that ‘...the more eyes, different eyes, through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our “conception” of it, our “objectivity” will be’. But, if the truth about anything is equated with the omniperspectival view of it, then our perspectival view is one-sided and false. Dr Clark (1990), in her chapter on Perspectivism (pp 127 – 158), ably defends her reading of this doctrine against Magnus’s omniperspectival account. She reinterprets the *Genealogy* passage in the following way. As stated above, she agrees that the opening lines of the extract are an attack on the thing in itself, and the metaphor of perspective is put forward to rid us of this contradictory idea. In the passage quoted from Magnus above, he denies that we can have non-perspectival knowledge, and goes on to identify truth with an omniperspectival view. But Clark (rightly) argues elsewhere in her chapter that the denial of non-perspectival knowledge (Kant’s things in themselves) is perfectly ‘compatible with the claim that a particular perspective is superior to some or all other perspectives’ (p. 148, *ibid.*).

But that still leaves us with the famous passage where Nietzsche talks about seeing things with different eyes. Magnus obviously reads this as evidence for his omniperspectivism. Clark’s explication seems closer to Leiter’s here. She says that Nietzsche has suddenly changed the subject. He is now talking *about objectivity*. He is firmly rejecting any idea of absolute (i.e. strong) objectivity. We know things from our perspective, but we are also open to alternative perspectives. We can stand back from our own perspective and assess it, try to be impartial for once. If we decide that another perspective is superior to our own, then we should adopt that new perspective. But Clark issues an important *caveat* here: ‘The objective person does not hereby transcend the perspectival character of knowledge, but only assumes for the moment a different perspective, one that does not take a stand on the points at issue between her usual perspective and a competing one’ (p. 149, *ibid.*).

Maudemarie Clark thinks that Nietzsche, in effect, misleads us with his ‘different eyes’ talk, and he would have served objectivity better if he had expressed his viewpoint in different terms. What he should have said was, ‘If there is something inadequate about our perspective, do not attack the perspectival character of human knowledge. Rather, find a better perspective’ (Clark, 1990, p. 150).

My overall conclusion is that, contrary to Tanner's opinion, Nietzsche does have a coherent view of perspectivism. He can allow for the importance of many different perspectives without committing himself to an omniperspectival view of truth. Magnus seems confused on this issue. Perhaps his camera illustration is just the wrong reading of the perspectival metaphor. As he himself admits, it seems to presuppose the God's-eye view. The Clark–Leiter reading has the advantage here and makes more sense of Nietzsche's position *in toto* (13).

### Notes to Chapter 4 on Perspectivism and Truth

- 1 The relevant section of the Third Essay is Section 12. I am using the recent translation of this work by Douglas Smith, Oxford, 1996.
- 2 Perhaps the best-known of MacIntyre's books is called *After Virtue*, 1982. See also his 'Genealogies and Subversions' in his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 1990.
- 3 Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) now has the status of a classic in the field of epistemology. Other works by this author worth consulting are 'Pragmatism, Relativism, Irrationalism' in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 1982, and of course, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 1989.
- 4 Alexander Nehamas responds to Rorty's arguments in his more recent paper in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Nehamas, 1996). See especially p. 231.
- 5 The Schacht paper is also one of the contributions to *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. It is the first essay in Part III, that is Chapter 5. See especially p. 161.
- 6 Brian Leiter's excellent paper was one of the contributions to a volume edited by Richard Schacht called *Nietzsche, Genealogy Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morals'*, 1994. More recently (1998) Professor Leiter has written a very good article on Nietzsche for the *TLS* to mark the centenary of Nietzsche's death (see Bibliography for details).
- 7 I borrow this remark from the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Magnus and Higgins, 1996, p. 4).

- 8 *Four Quartets* is available in a Faber paperback version.
- 9 For a very good discussion of the concept of objectivity, see David Hamlyn's paper, simply called 'Objectivity' which is reprinted in *Education and the Development of Reason* (Hamlyn, 1972).
- 10 Nietzsche, of course, is not denying facts as truths. A good study on this area is *Science and Subjectivity* by Israel Scheffler (1982).
- 11 Hamlyn originally argued for this idea of Conceptual Truth in his *Theory of Knowledge*, 1971. See especially the chapter called 'A-priori knowledge'.
- 12 Bernd Magnus's paper is in *Reading Nietzsche* edited by Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (Magnus, 1988). It is called 'The Deification of the Commonplace', p. 152. Section I of this paper is the one to focus on.
- 13 Michael Luntley, in a little booklet called *The Real Thing* (first published in 1992 by Channel 4 TV) which he wrote to accompany a series of programmes on Channel 4, debates the issues raised in this study of Nietzsche in the form of a witty dialogue. He has a whole range of characters, starting with EVE who is just a seeker after knowledge; then there is Pope Pius IV, and Galileo Galilei puts in an appearance, followed by Sir Robert Boyle. But the highlight is a character called Postmodern Pat who is described as a philosopher of today. What Postmodern Pat says in this wonderful little piece is very close to Nietzsche in many respects – very entertaining, but also very informative. To obtain a copy send a cheque or postal order for £2.50 made payable to Channel 4 Television, addressed to The Real Thing, P O Box 4000, London W3 6XJ.

## Conclusion

*'Philosophy proceeds always under the risk of making a fetish of thinking.'* – Dr John Carroll, in *Breakout from the Crystal Palace* (p. 105)

My argument has been that when we examine Nietzsche's published texts more closely, a coherent view of truth is discernible. We can allow that Nietzsche does not present us with a fully worked out theory of truth or an elaborate epistemology. This, in any case, was not his primary concern. He was first and foremost a philosopher of value. What interested him was the worth that concepts like truth and knowledge have for us. We value them because they enable us to expand our power base. Very early on, Nietzsche realized that illusions and myths were just as important as truth. In some situations they were even more life-enhancing. Recent empirical research in psychology confirms Nietzsche's intuitions here. Adopting extreme sceptical positions is not conducive to a well-balanced emotional life. Philosophers tend to think that a belief's indispensable value for us shows that it is true, but Nietzsche points out that a belief can be indispensable for life and false. A little illusion from time to time can be medicine for the mind (1).

We have seen that what Nietzsche definitely rejected was any metaphysical view of truth or knowledge. There was no hidden essence shrouded in mystery, no Kantian thing in itself. But it does not immediately follow from this that truth is made redundant. In saying there is no truth, one assumes that the speaker is trying to convey something veridical. Any dismissal of truth paradoxically assumes its own truthfulness. Otherwise, we encounter an endless regress. Nietzsche can reject the thing in itself as an incoherent notion and still retain a more conventional idea of truth. This requires no more than an adherence to the equivalence principle which we find in Tarski's writings. However, Nietzsche was slow in coming to a realization of this common-sense viewpoint because he

was misled by certain doctrines which he found in the writings of his predecessor, Schopenhauer. I am thinking in particular of representationalism. That's why Nietzsche continued to argue that truth was illusory right up to the time he wrote BGE and GM.

Overall, what Nietzsche was trying to do in his published works was to develop a much more sophisticated attitude towards belief. It was to be one which accorded a central role to the body as a source of motivation. This was meant to replace earlier and more abstract theories which were too metaphysically top-heavy. He advocated a move away from abstraction to a more naturalistically based account of truth and knowledge. This meant taking human need and interests into account. There is a famous passage in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which seems to encapsulate this shift of focus (2):

'The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a herdsman. Your little intelligence, my brother, which you call "spirit", is also an instrument of your body, a little instrument and toy of your great intelligence'.

The passage has been variously interpreted, but the Great Reason or intelligence is clearly what Jung calls the Self (Lea, 1972 also uses this term in his study). The Self in this sense is basically unconscious and of course, in Nietzsche can be taken as equivalent to the bodily instincts. The little intelligence seems closer to what we would call the *Ego* or the conscious, rational mind. It is the purely logical side of the mind. Nietzsche is, in effect, attacking the Enlightenment idea that estimates of truth or, indeed, falsity can be based on purely conceptual analysis alone. His exploration of beliefs in the light of the values and quality of will they encompass is set against our assumption of the autonomy of intellectual activity. The following lines from W B Yeats readily spring to mind:

'God guard me from those thoughts men think  
In the mind alone;  
He that sings a lasting song  
Thinks in the marrow bone;'

From *A Prayer for Old Age* (3)

As we have seen, Nietzsche argues that it is, in fact, the case that philosophical beliefs mask Will to Power, and this state of affairs is not one that might be deduced logically or

gleaned through conceptual analysis on its own. Nietzsche is also attacking the ancient model whereby the ideal believer is a passive disinterested observer who is just mirroring a pre-existing order that is not of his own manufacture. In its extreme form, as put forward by Plato, this ideal spectator transcends the unstable world of appearance to attain true knowledge of the eternal verities. But, as we have seen in previous chapters, believing, for Nietzsche is not some privileged activity by which we transcend the world of the senses to achieve a God-like harmony with the real order of immutable Forms (4).

As a naturalist, Nietzsche sees belief as a human activity. It is a way of manipulating the world to suit our interests. But the point is that there is a world out there to discover, separate from us. We do not, as some writers appear to suggest, create a world *ex nihilo*. (Nehamas veers in this direction, 1985, p. 59.) Other writers also tend to set up a false dualism between creativity and discovery here. Surely, both processes are involved. We have to interpret the world we discover and we are being creative when we do this. It is to Schacht's credit that he grasps this and tries to make the point explicit in the following excerpts :

'One reason Nietzsche has often been misunderstood on this matter relates to his repeated insistence that truth is something [requiring to be] *created*. It is supposed that this commits him to the rejection of the idea that truth has anything to do with an adequacy relation... Since it seems to reduce the establishment of truth to mere fabrication and invention. This view is mistaken. To the extent that the world with which we deal and of which we are a part, in its particular features and contents, is the product of our transforming, constituting, fixing activity, "truth" with respect to it (along with it itself) is our doing and not merely something we may or may not discover. We bring it into existence as we fashion the reality we encounter and are in a determinate manner. We thus establish the conditions of the possibility of truth as an adequacy-relation, and in doing so "create" it.' (Schacht, 1983, pp 108–109).

In Chapter 3, it became evident that, for Nietzsche the Will to Truth is but one aspect of the Will to Power. The truly great philosopher recognizes this as being so (Nietzsche himself perhaps being the first to do so), whereas the Platonists and the Christians fail to

comprehend their will as a Will to Power, and instead present us with a semblance of disinterested objectivity. According to Nietzsche:

‘Genuine philosophers, however, are commanders and legislators: they say, “thus it shall be”. Their knowing is creating, their creation is a legislation, their Will to Truth is – Will to Power.’ (BGE, section 211).

There is a curious section in Book V of *Daybreak* which confirms what I said earlier about Nietzsche’s dissatisfaction with the activity of the ‘little intelligence’, as he called it. In section 481 of D, called ‘Two Germans’, Nietzsche compares the thought of Kant and Schopenhauer in respect of their soul, and not just their intellect, with people like Plato, Spinoza, Rousseau and Goethe. He feels that the German duo lack something crucial:

‘Their thoughts do not constitute a passionate history of the soul; there is nothing here that would make a novel, no crisis, catastrophes or death scenes, their thinking is not at the same time an involuntary biography of a soul, but in the case of Kant, the biography of a head, in the case of Schopenhauer, the description and mirroring of a character...’ (D, Cambridge edition, p. 480).

One could argue that what Nietzsche is doing is making a plea for the irrational side of our nature. In doing so, he anticipates modern movements like existentialism and psychoanalysis. Professor William Barrett (1962), in his classic study of existentialism (5) portrays Nietzsche as an existentialist because he insists on the limits of reason, declaring that logic alone cannot account for guilt, anxiety, alienation, fragmentation, etc. Any philosophy which failed to include the absurd would be incomplete. On p. 276 of his book, Barrett writes: ‘In modern philosophy man has figured almost exclusively as an epistemological subject – as intellect that registers sense data, makes propositions, reasons and seeks the certainty of intellectual knowledge, but not as the man underneath all this who is born suffers and dies. Naturally, the attempt to see the whole or integral man, in place of the rational or epistemological fragment of him, involves our taking a look at some unpleasant things... We are still so rooted in the Enlightenment or uprooted in it – that these unpleasant aspects of life are like Furies for us: hostile forces from which we

would escape. And, of course, the easiest way to escape the Furies, we think, is to deny they exist.'

In different words, there has to be some sort of compromise between our advanced consciousness and the more ancient chthonic unconscious. But, it seems to me that, in general, Barrett is closer to Heidegger's position than he is to Nietzsche's. But there is another American philosopher who has put forward a philosophy which seems much closer in spirit to Nietzsche. Susanne Langer's view in her *Philosophy in a New Key* is more empirical, and she also acknowledges a role for psychoanalysis and aesthetics, paying particular attention to music. Only a brief summary of her work can be offered here. Mrs Langer argues that the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformations of experience not as a poor substitute for action but as a basic human need. This conception of symbolic transformation she claims affords us a new key in philosophy (6). One of her conceptions of symbolism leads to logic and meets new problems in the theory of knowledge and science; the other takes her in the opposite direction to psychoanalysis, the study of emotions, religion, phantasy and everything but knowledge. Yet, in both spheres, we have a leading theme: the human response as a constructive, not a passive thing. Mrs Langer points out that philosophers interested in theory of knowledge and psychologists agree 'that symbolization is the key to that constructive process...'. On p. 46 of the same work she states that 'Symbolisation is pre-rational but not pre-rational'. This gets amplified further on p. 91 where we are informed that 'rationality is the essence of mind and symbolic transformation its elementary process. It is a fundamental error therefore to recognise it only in the phenomenon of systematic explicit reasoning'.

There are, it transpires, two basic types of symbolism. The explicit discursive type is well known, but we must not restrict intelligence to this and relegate all other conceptions to some irrational realm of feeling and instinct. Mrs Langer brings in a second, non-discursive symbolic mode at this point. This accounts for imagination, dream, myth, ritual as well as practical intelligence. The recognition of this 'presentational symbolism' permits her to construct a theory of understanding which leads to a critique of art, just as discursive symbolism points to a critique of science. This gives every



indication of being an interesting avenue of exploration for someone who is concerned, as I am, with both these modes of human experience.

## Notes to Conclusion

- 1 The great Swiss psychologist, C G Jung puts a great stress on myths and the unconscious mind. He drew many of his ideas from Nietzsche (e.g. the idea that dreams are compensatory) but he also retains much of the Schopenhauerian metaphysics which Nietzsche rejects. Both Jung and Nietzsche were life-affirmers and both were centrally concerned with creativity. Jung did not abandon the religious path, whereas Nietzsche concentrated more on aesthetics. Jung, though, always maintained that Nietzsche was a religious thinker, though his god was dead.
- 2 This passage is near the beginning of Part I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the Section called 'Of the Despisers of the Body'. I am using the Penguin Classics rendition by Hollingdale (1969, pp 61 – 62).
- 3 Yeats's poem is from his collection called *A Full Moon in March* (1935). See *Selected Yeats* by Norman Jeffares (1962, p. 175). J P Stern criticizes this poem in his Fontana Modern Masters book on Nietzsche (1978, p. 23). For a most interesting paper on Nietzsche's influence on Yeats, see Chapter 7 by Erich Heller in his *The Importance of Nietzsche* (1988), starting on p. 127.
- 4 I have drawn some ideas here from Ken Gemes's article on 'Nietzsche's Critique of Truth', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, March 1992.
- 5 *Irrational Man* by William Barrett was first published in his native America in 1958. My edition is an Anchor Books version published in 1962. Nietzsche gets discussed in Chapter 8 (p. 177).
- 6 Mrs Langer's first book *Philosophy in a New Key* remains her best-known work. She was much influenced by the German neo-Kantian scholar Ernst Cassirer. I have used the paperback version of her book, published by Mentor Books, 1951.

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